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FROM DAWN TO SUNSET

BOOK I THE SONG OF YOUTH

BOOK II THE SONG OF MANHOOD

BOOK III THE SONG OF RIPER MANHOOD

BY

GEORGE BARLOW

Author of "The Pageant of Life"



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GENERAL

NOTE.

MY best thanks are due to Messrs. Hays, Messrs. Hutchings and Romer, and Messrs. Hopkinson, for kindly allowing me to republish in this volume the following Lyrics which have been set to music, and published by them :—

The Brighton Coach (page 52).

Set to Music by J. Edward German. Published by Messrs. Hays, under the title of "A Wayside Story."

The Old Red Coat (page 53).

Set to Music by Joseph L. Roeckel. Published by Messrs. Hutchings and Romer.

Moments (page 290).

Set to Music by Ernest Birch. Published by Messrs. Hopkinson, under the title of "Among the Wildwood Bowers."

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Dedication.

TO JOHN ALEXANDER BLENCOWE,
MY OLDEST FRIEND.

*SINCE the old days when you and I together
Roamed over purple miles of Cornish heather
And watched the arrowy trout in Cornish brooks,
Through the long thirty years, what blasts have sounded
From War's red trumpet, what fierce strifes abounded!
Strange is it, as back one looks!*

*Since the old Harrow days, what devastation
Has smitten the hopes of nation after nation:—
Wide Europe's fields have bled
Since you and I laughed round the merry wicket;
When all our hopes were centred in our cricket,
Nor mattered it if kings or popes fell dead!*

*What was their fate, compared to winning merely
A racquet-match! The latter struggle clearly
(Could any doubt?) meant most to gods and men.
Ah! happy days,—ere love with all its passion
Remoulds us in half-sweet half-mournful fashion,—
Ye come not back again.*

*In the long years how many well-loved faces
Have vanished from our gaze! What vacant places,
Looking around, we see.
Yet still the earth hath flowers to wreath and cherish
For us, old friend. Past hopes like dead leaves perish,
And young-leaved new hopes spring round you and me.*

DEDICATION.

*The seasons come and go. Seaward the swallow
Turns. Spring's hand stars each furzy glade and hollow :
The golden sumptuous autumn cornlands gleam.
Sweet Summer binds her hair in leafy places.
Men die,—love lives, and passion's wild embraces
Change life into a dream.*

*Great nations fall : new nations rise above them.
Sad human hearts are wrung when hearts who love them
Pass, at the death-god's wing.
Some friendships are quite dead,—some fast are going.
Some founts are dry that once were overflowing.
But still our friendship is a living thing.*

*Little we dreamed that I, the Muses wooing,
Should spend my days their shy sweet gaze pursuing,—
That I should bring you after thirty years
These flowers of song—some where the dew yet lingers,
Some gathered later on with weary fingers,
Some blossoms wet with tears !*

*Ah ! when we saw the Harrow green fields spreading
Bright in the sun, if life's path we are treading
Had then as clearly showed,
Should we have flinched, as we drew back the curtain ?
God knows. But this, old friend, we know for certain :
Our friendship has shed light on all the road.*

PRELUDE.

DAWN TO SUNSET.

BENEATH the high majestic morning gleaming
Once field and mount and moor and forest lay :
O'er joyous vale and hill I wandered, dreaming
That all life's hours were as the dawn of day.

The sun's touch woke the golden daffodilly ;
His clear beam drew the snow-drop from repose :
Then first love said, " My heart is like the lily !"
And passion said, " My soul is as the rose !"

First love and passion with the sun's rich glory
Mixed souls as ardent as that mighty flame.
When love spake, every flower took up love's story :
When passion spake, dream-flowers yet lovelier came.

So love and passion took the world with sweetness,
With sovereign sceptre swayed the sea and land :
The flowers at love's touch won their full completeness,
And passion thrilled the world through woman's hand.

Woman was queen of all the young day's splendour,
Her crown was woven of morning's lustrous light.
At noontide love, perhaps, a shade less tender
To man's heart seemed,—passion a shade less bright.

Through the still afternoon, when shadows lengthened
And on the hills fell silence as of grief,
Though deep within the soul love's sweet force strengthened,
The fierce heat scorched full many a flower and leaf.

Full many a dream had passed, the light of morning
No longer lingered on the sapphire wave.

The shadows whispered, as in sombre warning,

“The sun’s sea-cradle is the great sun’s grave !

“The sea, from which he rose to fill the air-spaces

With light that laughed to see his victory won,

His joy reflected in a million faces,

Will spread forth darkness, and engulf the sun.

“As surely as the morning flamed resplendent,

Full, as it seemed, of leagues of deathless light,

Will evening, dark slave on the sun attendant,

Turn traitor, slay the sun, and serve the night.”

Ah ! so the shadows whispered. But I waited,

I let the dreary shadows tell their tale :

I watched the flowers within the woods belated ;

I saw the light upon the hill-tops fail.

I saw the sun’s gold chariot, wave-encumbered,

Sink in those very waters whence it shone—

Not long, devoid of life, the darkness slumbered :

Star-torches flashed round black night’s ebon throne.

Then, as Love’s heart made all its vast aim clearer,

I saw that one pale sun had taken flight

For this—that Love might bring to man’s gaze nearer

Unnumbered suns, and never-ending light.

BOOK I.

THE SONG OF YOUTH.

I.
FIRST LOVE.



SONNETS.

SONNET I.

A VISION.

ONCE clear and white the mortal woman came,
And softly filled the silent yearning room
With a superb exuberance of bloom,
A force of sweetness burning like a flame.
My soul leapt forth, her passionate soul to claim :
A sense as of her presence smote the gloom :
I saw her eyes, and heard her lips say, "Come !"
I rose, and almost called her by her name.

She filled the room ; and, as for me, I wept
And closed my eyes, and opened them again
To find her still before me,—then I slept :
But through my sleep I felt her eyes remain
Watching, till rapture deepened into pain
Almost, while onward hours like ages crept.

SONNET II.

THE SEA-PALACE.

In the fair days of youth I did behold
One standing on the sea-shore, and her face
Smote me with sudden rapture. Then that place,
O'er which the sea-wind travelled gaunt and cold,
Became as a sweet palace wrought of gold
And chiselled into cunning lines of grace ;
And in its heart a fountain I could trace,
And many a pillar of no mortal mould.
And still, when I am wandering by the sea,
The wild winds thrill me with a sudden tune,
Bringing that palace back again to me,
And the early crescent of love's rising moon :
" Surely," I whisper, " I shall meet her soon,
And pass those palace-gates triumphantly ! "

SONNET III.

THE MAIDEN BLOSSOM.

My lady's soul is maidenly and pure :
It has not flowered—it is divine as yet
With God's first blessing, with fresh dewdrops wet ;
The blossom waits for true love to secure.
All sorrow passes from me, all regret,
For now I know the paths of God are sure,
And that the glances soft that once I met
Are mine for ever,—so I but endure.
All hardness, therefore, in this perfect faith,
That so illumines and transfigures death,
I can make light of, suffering to the end :
Now that I know that holy God is true,
Life's clouds have parted, and the glad bright blue
Shows God's face as the lost face of a friend.

SONNET IV.

CHIEFEST.

If any man would win a crown to last,
First let his inmost spirit of love be pure,—
First let him life's high mountain-air endure,
And face the thunder and the midnight blast.
When this world's restless seas are safely past
There shall be pleasure, and there shall be praise,
And fame perhaps, and garlands of green bays,
And recompense; but such flowers spring not fast.
Who would be first, must fight the fight most hard;
In labours and in sorrows must abound;
Smooth things and easy must his soul discard;
In battle's red front must his sword-stroke sound :—
Who would be chiefest in the world's regard,
With the world's supreme sorrow must be crowned.

SONNET V.

ATONEMENT.

It is *thy* sorrow, lady, that at last
Shall amply and with certitude repay :
My cross shall draw thee towards me,—thou shalt say
“ I nailed him there, my folly nailed him fast
To this accursèd wood one bitter day,
Far-off but unforgotten, in our past :
I drove the nails in, while he gazed aghast ;
Then left him there to wear the years away.”
When thou dost see and say this gracious thing,
Self-sentenced, sad, repentant,—when thine eyes
Look large and lovely as the great drops rise
Therein, and round the downcast lashes cling,
Those tears shall be as pearls within my crown.
Thou didst the wrong. Thou only canst atone !

SONNET VI.

WEDDED DIVERSITY.

JOINED, yet not hopelessly confused or blended,
Shall spirit-lovers in their union be.
If one fair shape were lost, desire were ended,—
Then would ensue unglad satiety.
High individual power shall be extended ;
Though two are one, yet separate thoughts shall mingle,
As through the spirit-lips the rich throbs tingle,—
The thoughts that here on separate forms depended.
Not mixed, not swallowed up, but grand as ever
Shall be the spirit-body of my bride :
Not brought too near to kiss, the sweet eyes never
Obscured, but brightened rather,—deified ;
The sweet lips still a separate perfect flower ;
The pure mind still an independent power.

SONNET VII.

THE GROWTH OF LOVE.

I AM as one who, threading tropic woods
The first time, wondered at the marvels fair
That met his yearning vision everywhere
Through the green splendid tangled solitudes,—
Who worshipped in that dense and torrid air
Some wonderful white blossom by the way,
Ready to kiss with tender lips each spray
That laughed beneath the blue heavens' burning glare.
Just as he worshipped wildly,—yet at last,
When the sweet days of distant awe were past,
Plucked tenderly the blossom for his own,—
So hold I now my snow-white bud too near
For the old tremulous glance, the old sweet fear,
Since worship into living love has grown.

SONNET VIII.

LOVE'S SUMMER.

THE spring has passed,—the spring-time of my strain,
The spring of thy fair life. Now summer round us
Beams, and the laughing-eyed swift loves have found us
Who gaily tread in his impassioned train.

Thine hair is fragrant with the smell of flowers
Still,—but no flowers of simpler spring remain ;
Still art thou beauteous as in those first hours
Of love,—but no lost hours again we gain.

We pass towards perfect summer. Our delight
Is hidden for us among the full-leaved trees,
And 'mid the passion of the August night,
And by the moonlit wonderful still seas
Of August : thine imperial face is bright
With summer thoughts and ripest ecstasies !

SONNET IX.

REAL JOYS.

No vision, sweet but formless, shall be mine :
No vision, pale and bloodless, in the end,—
Thine own bright soul the Lord of love shall send,
With mine own spirit to mingle and combine,
Forming one spirit imperishable, divine,
Serene, superb, ecstatic. Then the real
Pleasure shall utterly surpass the ideal
Pure hope that heaven has given us for a sign.
The real undreamed-of joys of thine embrace,
And all the glory of thy passionate face,
I then shall win ; and pass beyond regret.
I tarry for that ultimate high grace
Which round me robes of victory shall place,
And on my forehead starry triumph set.

SONNET X.

SLOWLY.

SLOWLY my song grows,—as from day to day
 I add fresh flowers of ever-intenser thought ;
 Bright buds the calm of riper age has brought,
 Soft violets, roses, red leaves,—many a spray
 Rich with the flying tints of autumn gay,
 Or blossoms in dense woods of summer sought ;—
 Blue hyacinths and crocus-petals fraught
 With spring, and spikes of frost from winter grey.

Slowly my song grows. To each word a year
 Of patient and of earnest thought I give,
 If haply, when the world's last leaf is sere,
 Thy songs may still be spring-sweet, lady dear !
 If haply, in pure music meet to live,
 I may immortalize thy laughter clear.

SONNET XI.

FIFTEEN.

WHEN first I saw thee, lady of my dreams,
 And watched love's sunrise shed its ardent gold
 O'er hill and valley and wild purple wold—
 The golden light which once superbly gleams,
 Then fades for ever ; when, beside the streams
 Of that fair Northern many-tinted sea,
 Thy girlish tender presence shone on me,
 But fifteen years had crowned thee with sunbeams.

And Dante's Beatrice was but fifteen !
 And her sweet deathless eyes were soft sea-green
 When first she stood before him in the way ;—
 So wast thou girl-soft, simple and divine,
 When first thy young yet timeless glance met mine,—
 Green, mixed with soft sea-shadows of brown-grey.

SONNET XII.

THE EARLY SWEETNESS.

A ROSE was blooming as I passed along
The gentle roads of youth towards early toil :
A perfect flower it was, without a soil,
And round it all the gracious scent was strong.
To gather it thus early had been wrong,—
So, well content, I hastened on my way,
Devoting till the evening of the day
All thoughts and passionate labour to my song.
But in the evening, when I thought the hour
For holy gathering of the fragrant flower
Approached,—rude other hands had robbed the stem ;
Yet though these grasp the crimson rose mature,
Her fragrance in life's morning, strangely pure,
Was given to me, thank God !—not given to them.

SONNET XIII.

THE OLD VALLEY.

AH ! still the old waves upon the gold sand breaking,
And still the old windy cliff-side and the sky,
Unchanged from the old lost days when you and I
Clasped in sweet dreams too sweet and soft for waking
Wandered,—and watched the salt free sea-wind shaking
The tufted heads of clover and of grass.
Now what is left us, as towards death we pass?
Sorrow, and flowerless days, and lone heart-aching !
Ah ! still the old valley,—and the fern-leaves yonder
And all the clustered grace of meadow-sweet !
Do never Winter's spears of snowy sleet
'Torture the glades? Are the black wings of thunder
Forbidden now to dash the fronds asunder,
That all is changeless still though we shall ne'er,
Unchanged, be there !

SONNET XIV.

LIFE'S GIFTS.

WHEN I grow grey and men shall say to me,
 "What was the worth of living, truly told?—
 Lo! thou hast lived thy life out; thou art old;
 Thou hast gathered fruit from many a green-leaved tree,
 And kissed love's lips by many a summer sea,
 And twined soft hands in locks of shining gold :—
 But all thy days are dead days now, behold!
 Life passes onward,—what is life to thee?"

Then will I answer,—as thy gracious eyes,
 Love, gleam upon me from dim far-off skies,—
 "Life had its endless deathless charm,—and still
 That charm weaves rapture round me at my will.
 Life has its glory :—for I have seen *Thee*;
 And roses,—and June sunsets,—and the sea."

SONNET XV.

VENUS INCARNATE.

UPON the old cliff thou stood'st with wondrous eyes
 Wherethrough the timeless soul of Venus shone;
 And I,—I knew myself thy bard alone
 Till very death turns faint of heart and dies.
 Thy soul was mingled with the pale-blue skies,
 And the far dark-blue waters were thy throne,
 And through thy voice spake Venus' silver tone;
 Robed wast thou, mortal, in immortal wise.

So thou dost hold my soul for evermore,
 O Venus-lady, in thy tender hands,
 Which held innumerable souls of yore
 And swayed the unsearchable and ancient lands,—
 Now clasping *my* soul where grey breakers roar
 And charge along the vapour-shrouded sands.

SONNET XVI.

AUGUST BLOSSOMS.

THESE are late August blossoms. Spring's glad days
Lie far behind us ; early dreams have fled.
Not for us flames the golden crocus-bed :
No tender snow-drops lift their gentle gaze.
Roses are round us still,—and lily-sprays
Their fierce white fragrance on the warm airs shed ;
Not all the flowers of sunburnt fields are dead,
Though dead is all the bloom that once was May's.
Across the years, across the weary years,
Alice, sweet early love, I look to thee,
And, gazing through a gathering mist of tears,
I watch the flower-crowned cliff, the sun-crowned sea :
Robed in strange light, thy girlish form appears,
And thine eyes draw and thine hand beckons me.

SONNET XVII.

VENUS.

WHAT do they tell thee of me,—that I sing
Of white-armed Venus ? that in English air
I find alone the old Greek visions fair ?
That love-gifts towards the old dead gods I bring ?
Oh, thou art Venus ! Linger ever there,
Where the wind touches with light-kissing wing
Thy beautiful brown unforgotten hair :
Be thou the goddess of the world's first spring !
Venus was goddess in the old sweet days,
And through the sunlit foam of Grecian bays
Shone radiant and divine her tender limbs.
So thou art goddess of the days when I,
Greek-souled and ardent, laughed to see the sky
So blue, and sang to it with marriage-hymns.

SONNET XVIII.

GOD'S MESSAGE.

AND have they told thee that I've ceased to hold
 The faith in God,—that deadliest war I wage
 With creeds and Churches in this struggling age,
 And sing the future's song with lips made bold?
 Oh, by the sea, and by the sunset's gold,
 And by the summer fields of far-spread flowers,
 And by grey wintry rocks and soft green bowers,
 By Nature's wealth unmeasured and untold,
 By all these things, I charge thee, have no fear!—
 Is God the less a strong God unto me
 Because my soul would have him very near,
 And would be crowned with wild air of the sea—
 Would in no stifling church his message hear,
 But where his stars shine and his winds are free?

SONNET XIX.

THE CALM OF ART.

NOUGHT breaks the high majestic calm of Art :
 Not storm, nor shipwreck, nor the angry sea,
 Nor clouds wherethrough the thunders charge and flee,
 Nor sounds whereat the stricken nations start.—
 Art sits within her temple, sorrow-free,
 Unmoved and silent. When mad armies march,
 Her soft eyes watch the far-stretched rainbow arch,
 Or tuft of furze coquetting with the bee.
 All these things move her not.—Yet can she wake,
 Alive and breathless, all her heart on fire,
 Her swift hand seeking her forgotten lyre :
 Alice ! one word of thine hath power to make
 Art's sweet lips tremble,—as the unruffled lake
 Breaks into ripples at the wind's desire.

ELEVEN YEARS AGO.

ELEVEN years since all the night was filled
With thee, and at thy spirit-touch I thrilled,
Long years of pain.
Ah! wilt thou never, blossom of my dream,
Within the palace of my slumber gleam,
Never again?
All seems so far, so long ago,
The sweet joy that I once did know!

Thou camest : and the solemn night was hushed,
And on thy face the rose of passion blushed,
So pure and fair ;
And I was wrapt in ecstasy sublime,
And wafted upward towards an unknown clime
Of lordlier air ;
And yet it seems so far to-day.
The heavens were blue. They are so grey !

Thou camest : and before thy feet fell dead
Each sin and terror, and thy queenly head
Lay close to mine ;
And all the music of our ancient shore
Seemed round about our listening hearts to pour
A chant divine.
O Alice, o'er eleven years
The winged thought flies and wakens tears.

Thou camest.—Ah, what days have since been ours !
Thorns I have gathered. Hast thou gathered flowers ?
How long and strange
The gloomy sun-forgotten years have been,
As day passed day and scene succeeded scene
With little change.
It seemeth now a far-off thing,
That night when all the stars did sing !

Thou wilt come ? When the sunset o'er the sea
Brightens to solemn gold, wilt thou not be
Beside the waves ?
When all the flowers of life are pale and dead,
Wilt thou not stand beside the last flower's head
With touch that saves ?
I missed thee at life's dawn. Shall I
Possess thee once before I die ?

Thou wilt come. Surely when the roses die,
And never more the lily's laugh is nigh,
In autumn days,—
When the great red leaves burn with autumn fire,
As I with lifelong measureless desire,
The woodland ways
Will smile to see thee pass along,
And, almost, wake to summer song !

Thine eyes of old were wet with tender love ;
Passion fell like an aureole from above

Upon thy brow :

How is it with thee now long years have seen
Our forest haunts devoid of bard and queen,

Most songless now ?

Wilt thou for ever tarry, sweet ?

Is it not time that hands should meet ?

Thou camest through the night. Wilt thou not come
When all the blossoms of long labour bloom

Around thy path ?

Lo ! for the eleven long years I, day and night,
Have laboured, Alice, for thy soul's delight,

And faced the wrath

Of time, and conquered time, I deem :

Make love's truth sweeter than a dream !

THE IMMORTAL PAST.

THE gold-brown ripples curling by the banks
Of Esk ; the meadow-sweet in tufted ranks ;
The vast eternal ocean's moonlit swell ;
The purple heather broidering moor and fell ;
The green rich grass ; the blossoms by the way ;
All that Love saw in Love's one perfect day ;
The yellow laughing corn ; the fern-lined vale ;
Each summer gauzy cloud ; each ship's white sail ;
All these for ever in my song abide—
The grey or brown cliffs sloping to the tide ;
The great black prows that clove the yielding deep ;
The clustering stars that climbed the heavenly steep ;
The moon that rose behind the mystic towers ;
The gentle ghosts of each day's gathered flowers ;
All these are in my song,—and thou art there,
Tender to me alone,—to all hearts fair.

ONE LOOK.

HAVE not I been as Love through all these years, and given
The bloom of flowers and light of stars to thee?
Have not I raised thee high within song's bright-blue heaven?
What hast thou given to me?

Lo! flower on flower and star on star the glad months bring
thee,
And songs on songs have floated o'er the sea.
My harp were traitor indeed, if ever it failed to sing thee :
What wilt thou give to me?

The flowers of fourteen years, and all their love and laughter ;
The singing leaves of every green spring-tree ;
These have I given,—and more. And now what cometh after?
Just one swift look for me !

Just one look from the eyes that smote my youth and slew me ;
That now will leave not even my manhood free.
Just one swift flash of light that, lightning-like, darts through
me :
This,—and no more for me.

For songs and flowers and love, and pain that Christ might
covet,—
Pain deep as fathomless eternity,—
Thy face to see once more, with hardly time to love it,—
This, this is given to me !

For limitless strong love, and shoreless wild devotion,
What meet reward, love, think'st thou can there be?
What can the river give to the white-crested ocean?
Trust! Give that trust to me.

II.
LYRICS AND BALLADS.

I.
LOVE-LYRICS.

I.
THE STAR AND THE SEA.
I WANDERED along the meadows ;
The buttercups were bright,
And over the stream the swallow
Dashed in his headlong flight.
The reed and the iris blossomed,
The thrush and the blackbird sang,
And over the golden pebbles
The ripples danced and rang.
The world was full of sunlight,
And full of a dream of rest ;
The bright sun gilded the lilies
And the dragon-fly's glowing crest.
But my heart was full of anguish ;
In vain the flowers were fair ;
In vain the light stream rippled—
It only said "Despair."
For my love was far—oh, further
In heart, so I thought, from me
Than the tiniest star is distant
From its image in the sea.
Dark thoughts had come between us
And divided her heart from me,
And taken her further, oh, further
Than the star is from the sea.

II.

TO A CHILD.

O HAPPY child whose laughter
Rings down the lanes of May,
Thou hast the whole hereafter
Spread out for toil and play.
I envy thee thy May-time
Of griefless joy and rest :
My manhood has no playtime !
Your boyhood's much the best !

As thou advancest slowly
Along the brightening way,
Fair love, white-winged and holy,
Will meet thee, on a day.
I envy thee thy treasure
Of love that is to be,
For love left out the pleasure,
But kept the pain for me !

Yet there may come a season
When, spent with joy and grief,
And tired of love and treason
And summers sweet and brief--
A time may come, my hearer,
In years that are to be,
When, longing death were nearer,
Thy heart will envy me !

III.

IN AUTUMN.

If thou and I indeed must part,
If even the sweetest days must close,
If time that severs rose from rose
Must also sever heart from heart,—
Oh, then not let our parting be
In Spring, that were too hard to bear !
For then the copses ring with glee,
A thousand blossoms scent the air.

When Spring's glad myriad voices
Sing love-songs of the heart,
When every bird rejoices,
It were too sad to part !

If thou and I must face the night,
The darkness where hopes earthly end,—
If, having called me "sweetest friend,"
Thou yet must vanish from my sight,—
Oh, then let not our parting be
In Summer, that were worse to bear !
Such glory rests upon the sea ;
This world is then so wondrous fair.

When every hour discloses
More fully Summer's heart
To Summer's countless roses,
'Twere sadder still to part !

If thou and I must face the fate
So many souls have faced before,
And, having met, must meet no more,
And, having loved, have loved too late,—
Oh, let our maddening parting be
In Autumn. If we part at last,
Let it be when the winds at sea
Thunder "Despair" in every blast !

When wild red leaves are flying,
Each bleeding at the heart,
Then is the time for sighing,
Then is the time to part !

IV.

LOVE'S VICTORY.

Love conquers all ! Love conquers all !
Though Fate and Time are strong,
In Love we trust, on Love we call,
And Love inspires our song.
The waves are high, the storm is fierce,
And starless seems the night ;
But Love can bid the clouds disperse
And change the gloom to light.

Love conquers all ! Love conquers all !
Between black prison-bars
And over many a prison-wall
He sends his silent stars.
Deep peace to weary hearts Love gives ;
Love conquers grief and pain :
Love finds the lost, and parted lives
Love joins in one again.

If all the flowers of earth were dead,
And frozen were the sun,
Still Love would lift his golden head
And yield his post to none.
A thousand foes have challenged Love,
But every foe shall fall :
Unmeasured victor Love shall prove,
For Love shall conquer all !

“THE BRIGHT YOUNG DAYS.”

LONG life brings many a blessing ;
 With the years man's wisdom grows :
 There are world-wide wrongs for redressing,
 There are noble truths to disclose.
 Yet ever man's heart keeps turning,
 With a strange and a fathomless yearning,
 To the beautiful bright young days
 When the blue sea laughed in the bays,—
 When the sunlight gilded the meadows,
 In the beautiful bright young days !

There is love for the old in their season
 (Bright gold is the autumn grain)—
 But the love that knew nothing of reason,
 Will it ever be with us again ?
 No : ever man's heart keeps turning
 With a wild gaze tearful and burning
 To the love of the sweet young days,
 For the tenderest laughter is May's,—
 The rich forest-gold is October's
 But the rose and its splendour are May's !

So the songs that will perish never,
 Be the world's age what it may,
 That will haunt men's hearts for ever
 Till the ashes of life turn grey,
 Are the beautiful songs of yearning
 Where the soul is swift and burning,
 The songs of the bright young days
 Ere flowers forsook the ways,—
 The songs of the days that are vanished,
 The beautiful bright young days !

“MY QUEEN AND I.”

WE walked the woods, my queen and I ;

The air was bright with spring :

Warm was the sun, and blue the sky,

And clear the lark did sing.

“O love, will you be ever true?”

“Ay, true till death!” she said ;

“True, till the sun forsakes the sky,

Till every star is dead.”

She spoke, and looked up with a sigh :

And then we smiled, my queen and I !

To-day we walked through waving corn ;

Our path lay through the gold :

It was a perfect August morn,

Sweet as that morn of old.

We strolled along, my wife and I :

“How short life seems,” she said ;

“How sad to think that love must die,

As spring-flowers all are dead.”

I heard, and looked down with a sigh :

And then we smiled, my queen and I !

And one day through life's autumn woods,

With golden leaves around,

Beneath grey sky my love and I

Shall wander, calm and crowned :

Crowned, not with summer dreams that melt

When sets the summer sun,

But with a sweetness only felt

When wedded hearts grow one.

Our looks will meet without a sigh

When we grow old, my queen and I !

VII.

THE LAND EVERLASTING.

THE fairest things, alas ! are ever fleetest ;
How glad, and yet how short, is sunny May :
For just one hour the rose is at its sweetest ;
The violet's perfume lasts but for a day.
For some short weeks the waves are at their brightest ;
The stars grow pale within the morning air :
One day the chestnut-bloom is at its whitest—
The next day sees it wither and despair,

And so with love.—It has its perfect splendour,
Its summer glory, when the twain hearts meet :
Its perfect hour of June, its moment tender,
Its sudden rapture, and its perfume sweet.
But ah ! it follows the departing roses ;
It trembles when the thunder smites the sky :
At autumn airs its fragrant blossom closes ;
At touch of wintry wind its petals die.

And yet beyond the days of pain and sadness,
Beyond time's seasons full of clouds and grief,
There must be somewhere everlasting gladness,—
A heaven that sees no red-stained autumn leaf.—
The loved souls who have left us travel thither ;
Within the gateways of that heaven they stand :
Ah, there the roses never pale nor wither !
There is no loveless winter in that land !

VIII.

NEVER ALONE.

Lo ! thou hast taught me, fairy queen,
How bright this world can be !
Love fills with beauty every scene,
And lights to blue the sea.
The throstle sings of love by day,
The nightingale by night :
Love was the word that Eden heard
When first the dark grew light.

If I had never seen thy face,
Thy voice had never heard,
Could sunshine smile in any place ?
Would spring hear any bird ?
The loveliest scene were sad, methinks,
If thou, love, wert not there :
The reeds upon the river-brinks
Would whisper, " We despair ! "

But oh ! I am not left alone.
The lone sun may despair,
The moon may seek her lonely throne
And find no helpmate there,
The stars may set, but never yet
Will true love cease to reign :
When love is true, each morn anew
Sweet love is born again !

“I LOVED HIM ONCE.”

“YES, I *did* love him very much”—

Are any words so sad?

The flower that loved the sun's bright touch,

That evermore was glad,—

The flower that loved the golden morn

Is pale and sad at eve :

In place of sweet love enters scorn ;

The sun's heart can deceive.

“I loved him once. But now, ah ! now,

My heart has sorely changed.

We seem apart, I know not how ;

Divided and estranged.

Ah ! once the merry sea was blue :

It seems a long time past !

I thought the joyous tints were true ;

I thought its calm would last.”

Oh, say not so ! Can love not heal

The wound love's hand has wrought ?

Will love not list to love's appeal ?

E'en love once set at nought.—

“I loved him once !” Oh, love him still,

And by long loving save.

Love with a love no time can chill,

And love beyond the grave !

AUTUMN WAILINGS.

WHEN youth is gone, and love is gone,
 What lights the woodland way?
 October's sunset, chill and wan;
 The light of Autumn grey.
 When youth is gone, and love is fled,
 For us the world might well be dead!

When youth is gone,—as dead leaves go
 Along the autumnal blast,—
 Then first ourselves we seem to know
 What all shall know at last;
 The autumn weariness of life,
 Past love and labour, zeal and strife.

When love is gone,—as blossoms fade,
 Fade swiftly one by one,—
 Our tired hearts tremble, as cold shade
 Replaces summer sun.
 When youth and love alike are fled,
 The brain lives on, the heart is dead.

THE SAME FOR EVER.

THE lilies shed their petals
 At every set of sun ;
 The weary grey dust settles
 Upon them, one by one ;
 And still, as we grow older,
 (Yes, so it sometimes seems !)
 Heart after heart turns colder ;
 Love only lived in dreams.

And yet this darkling message
 Most surely is not all ?
 A sign, an ominous presage
 That every flower shall fall ?—
 Love mocks pale Time's endeavour,
 And woman still is true ;
 Her heart's the same for ever,
 Be life's skies grey or blue !

The lover knows, and clearly.
 That endless suns may rise,
 But only far more dearly
 He loves the changeless eyes.
 Lives blend and grow completer
 While dying summers gleam,
 And late love's even sweeter
 Than first love's tender dream !

XII.

THE TEARLESS DAYS.

Was it sweet to have lived, I wonder,
In the days when the world was young?
When, parting the boughs in sunder,
In the forest the wood-nymph sung?
Was it sweet, in the woods' recesses,
To mark 'neath a moonlit sky
The glitter of Venus' tresses
As the queen and her train swept by?

She must have been grand and peerless,
Queen Venus, with Love in her train.
Then the eyes of the world were tearless:
Will they ever be tearless again?
Our woods and our groves are chilly,
The goddess is no more there:
'Mid our rocks and regions hilly
We mark not the light of her hair.

But still on the hedge there are roses,
There is light in our true love's eyes;
In the woods there are wild-flower posies,
And the sun still smiles in the skies.
Not a dark cloud threatens with thunder,
Not a white storm-wave gives tongue:
Shall we ever grow old, I wonder,
While the love in our hearts is young?

XIII.

CHANGELESS LOVE.

THE bloom is fair upon the hawthorn hedges ;
The throstles sing from many a budding spray ;
Blue ripples laugh along the river-edges ;
The blue sky seems to whisper, "It is May !"
And yet the thought of tawny-leaved September
Dismays the fancy with a touch of gloom :
Ay, and a mem'ry of old wild November,
Whose storm-winds trumpet forth pale Autumn's doom.

When love is at its sweetest, in its season,
When it is full of summer joy and mirth,
There sometimes comes the thought, "In love is treason :
Not always Summer sways the green-robed earth."
The bloom is bright upon the garden roses ;
Their red lips whisper, "Love is king to-day" :
Man's heart upon love's word in faith reposes,
Yet even love, so trusted, can betray.

Oh ! is there not some heart which never changes,
Some sympathy eternal and divine,
Some love that time nor weakens nor estranges ?
O sweetheart, let such changeless love be thine !
Then, whether storm-winds wail through wild November,
Or whether August splendour floods the sky,
Glad past all words it will be to remember
That, come what will, sweet love can never die.

XIV.

PAIN'S CONSTANCY.

WHEN the thought of our joys forsakes us
The thought of our sadness clings.
Its lovers and friends grief makes us,
But joy is a spirit with wings.
The place where we met is forgotten
Though the marvellous rose grew there ;
But the meadow-sweet where we parted
Wins its sweetness from despair.

The stars of the past have a lustre
Outshining the light of the sun :
The dreams of our youth will haunt us
Till our life's whole race is run.
Ay, ever in pale December,
When the fires of Christmas glow,
The dream that our hearts remember
Is the dream of long ago.

There is friendship in countless faces ;
There is true sweet love in a few ;
There are blossoms in endless places ;
Each summer brings skies of blue :
But the flowers our young hands gathered
Are the sweetest flowers that be,
And the faces we love for ever
Are the faces we never shall see !

TOGETHER.

THEY were young and glad together
 In the dawn of life's first May,
 When in bright and sunny weather
 Sang the birds from every spray.
 Clear the heaven shone out above them ;
 Blue and radiant were the skies :
 All things living seemed to love them,
 And the Spring gleamed in her eyes.

Through life's Summer still together,
 Hand in hand and heart to heart,
 They have borne the sultry weather
 And have watched the days depart.
 Still she is to him the maiden
 Who stepped daintily of old
 Through the grass, her apron laden
 With bright buttercups of gold.

Still together, still together,
 They will face life's autumn hours :
 In the grim November weather
 Love will strew their path with flowers.
 For their love has ever brightened
 Since the first long loving day,
 And their happiness has heightened,
 Though their hair is growing grey !

"A YEAR AGO."

A YEAR ago we stood beneath the temple-pillars white,
And watched the star-ships slowly sail across the purple night.
He asked me, "Did I love him?" Oh, the answer that I
gave!

A woman loves but once on earth, but once beyond the grave.
A year ago! a year ago! He has forgotten quite.
But I remember every word of love we spoke that night.

A year ago! a year ago! A little while it seems;
And yet 'tis long enough to prove that woman's hopes are
dreams.

I stand again to-night beside the blue Ægean wave:
Again the stars shine out—they seem to shine above my grave.
For oh, a woman loves but once! When once her soul is
given,

She cannot love again on earth . . . she cannot love in
heaven.

To-night, perhaps, 'neath other stars, beside another sea,
He breathes into another's ear the words he spake to me.
The cold stars sail across the sky, the cold blue ripples break:
I loved the stars and wavelets once . . . but only for his
sake.

O love, my tenderest hopes were dreams, and now the dreams
depart:

You gave me passion for an hour, but I gave you my heart.



XVII.

"IF WE HAD ONLY KNOWN!"

"If we had only known in time,
All had been different then!"
So goes the old unceasing plaint
Of women and of men.
"If only we had known the heart
Our cruel coldness broke!
If we had known what words can do,
Before we spoke!"

"If I had known!" so says the shower
In sorrow to the rose.
But what use is it to the flower
That sank 'neath cruel blows?
"If I had known!" the stormy wind
Says to the scattered spray.
"If I had only known!" each heart
Laments to-day.

O love, love, love, if I had known,
If you had known as well,
How happy might each heart have been,—
Glad past all power to tell!—
If only human hearts could know,
Could read the future plain,
Peace would be regnant here below
Instead of pain!

XVIII.

“ONLY A DREAM!”

I DREAMED I was walking with you, love,
By a wonderful summer sea :
The laughing waves were blue, love,
And oh ! you smiled on me.
But when the morning came, love,
The morning's cold white gleam,
The vision had vanished, had vanished—
Behold, it was only a dream !

Then all sweet things seemed dreams, love :
The life of the flowers and the trees,
The light of the moon that gleams, love,
The song of the summer breeze.
The scent of the rose was a fancy,
The green grass glittered in vain ;
The royal robe of the pansy
Was only a purple stain.

But now I am walking with you, love,
Though only along the street :
No wonderful sea is blue, love,
No scent on the airs is sweet.
But yet I *am* walking with you, love,
Your dark eyes soften and gleam ;
If I asked you to give me your heart, love,
Would it be only a dream ?

THE BIRD AND THE BUTTERFLY.

OVER the garden blossoms
 In young life's early hours
 A butterfly flew, and his wondrous hue
 Outglittered the fairest flowers.
 White, and red, and velvet-black—
 So were his grand robes wrought :
 I never had seen such gorgeous sheen,
 It dazzled and outstripped thought.
 Again and again the bright fly came,
 But the wonder never was quite the same.

Over the blue stream-ripples
 In young life's early days
 A bluer gleam flashed by like a dream,
 And it riveted quite my gaze.
 Just a kingfisher ! nothing more—
 But I thought, in my childish dream,
 That straight from the dell where the fairies dwell
 Came that wonderful azure gleam ;
 For I never believed the earth could bear
 A thing so pure or a thing so fair.

Kingfisher, butterfly, never again
 Will their glory seem the same !
 The fairy gleam was in that first dream
 When each for the first time came.—
 So it is with all sweet things on earth,
 And with all the joys we plan ;
 Love once shines bright—then it vanishes quite,
 And it never comes back to man.
 Light as a butterfly, swift as a bird,
 Away it flashes without a word !

XX.

“ONCE: THEN NO MORE!”

ONCE falls love's sunlight o'er the laughing billows ;
Once shines blue heaven upon youth's golden shore ;
Once love finds Eden 'mid our oaks and willows ;
Once: then no more !

Once perfect passion wakens sweet emotion ;
Once heaven is stormed, we tread the jewelled floor ;
One glimpse we gain of an immortal ocean,
One glimpse—no more.

One glance beyond death to the region deathless ;
One marvellous dream of life, then life is o'er ;
One gasp of joy that leaves the spent soul breathless,
Just this—no more.

XXI.

FOR EVER.

THE silver clouds will ever bend

Above the grass, whose tender green
Will ever glow and ever lend

The golden springs their softer sheen.
Beauty of hill and lake and tree

Will wax and wane for evermore :
Young eyes will watch the same blue sea
Break on the same white shore.

But, sweetheart, what of you and me ?

Time presses on us, we grow old.
We are not fadeless, like the sea,
Nor deathless, like the sunset's gold.
New cheeks will flush with love most sweet

When time with silver streaks our hair :
New eager love-lips will repeat
Love's tale, and find life fair.

What is immortal ? not the kiss

Of passionate love, though this be fond,
But something deeper—even the bliss
Of faithful love that looks beyond.

True love can see beyond the gloom,
Can pierce the depths of frozen sky :
True love begins its summer bloom
When false loves fade and die.

XXII.

SADNESS.

THE fruit once fallen is nothing to the bough :
The seed once shed is nothing to the flower.
Where golden corn once waved, now grides the plough.
The loveliest rose or face lasts just one perfect hour.

The sweetest moments pass. Another sun
Shall shine upon the joys that are to be.
Green leaves shall glitter, when our life is done.
The stars shall worship still the snowy-crested sea.

Life is immortal. But the lives of men
Are frail and weak and fugitive indeed.
They wither like the dry grass in the fen,
And other lives are born, and other loves succeed.

XXIII.

“IF ONLY THOU ART TRUE!”

If only a single Rose is left,
Why should the Summer pine?
A blade of grass in a rocky cleft;
A single star to shine.
—Why should I sorrow if all be lost,
If only thou art mine?

If only a single Bluebell gleams
Bright on the barren heath,
Still of that flower the Summer dreams,
Not of his August wreath.
—Why should I sorrow, if thou art mine,
Love, beyond change and death?

If only once on a wintry day
The sun shines forth in the blue,
He gladdens the groves till they laugh as in May
And dream of the touch of the dew.
—Why should I sorrow if all be false,
If only *thou* art true?

XXIV.

A DREAM OF A FLOWER.

I DREAMED a wonderful dream of a flower.
On the hillside green it grew :
But the tongue would fail, nor has brush the power
To paint that flower for you.
It scented the hillside far and wide,
And scented the fields of corn :
Its odour was sweet through the tall gold wheat,
And sweet on the airs of morn.

And when I woke, I marvelled :
My soul seemed breathing still
A fragrance never lavished
On mortal grove or hill.

And never, till love came down from above
With its rapture and despair,
Did I know what it meant,—nor God's intent
When he sent that dream so fair.
'T was as if God said, "The flower so sweet
That upon the hill did gleam
Was love ; for love is my tenderest flower,
And only blooms in a dream !"

And still I see the blossom,
And still the scent is there ;
And sometimes it brings gladness,
But oftener despair.

“THE WORLD WAS FAIR BEFORE WE MET.”

THE world was fair before we met,
 The mountain-lakes were blue,
 The sun in golden glory set,
 Soft fell the silver dew ;
 The stars came glimmering one by one
 And made all heaven divine,
 Till flashed again the monarch sun
 Upon the ocean-line.

But, when you came, how fairer far
 Was every sunny gleam :
 Love thrilled the heaven, and every star
 Became a passionate dream.
 The rose stole colour from your lips ;
 The lily-buds were fain
 To match those fairy finger-tips ;
 The song-birds sang in vain !

And now, if you must pass and go,
 What is there left to sing ?
 Would life be glad, without the glow
 Of green leaves in the spring ?
 O angel with the woman's face,
 Bid not sweet love depart ;
 Let time's hand sever stars from space,
 But never heart from heart !

XXVI.

CONSUMMATION.

LIFE was full of sweet emotion
When the spring of life was fair :
Bright blue shone the summer ocean ;
Songs of throistles charmed the air.
Passing through the fields one day,
Every hedge was rich with may,
Sweetening, silvering, every spray.

Followed fast the summer's glory,
Sheen of lily, flame of rose :
Flower by flower took up the story,
Till the tired eye claimed repose.
Though the summer's touch could thrill
Flower and leaf and wave and hill,
Something sweet was missing still.

Ah, my queen, my sovereign sweetness,
When thy fairy glance I knew,
Life attained its full completeness
And the rose its tenderest hue !
All things waited, pale, undone—
As the stars his heart has won
Watch the sea-line for the sun.

TWO ANGELS.

I WOULD not have thee an angel, dear !
 Thou then wouldst leave my side :
 Thy wings would carry thee far from here
 Through starlit skies and wide.
 I would not have thee an angel quite—
 At least not yet, my own !
 Thy wings might carry thee out of sight,
 And leave me here alone.

An angel—oh, that would be dull !
 No rides together then !
 No picnics by the mountain pool,
 Nor strolls in the moonlit glen !
 An angel's face might beauteous be,
 An angel's glance most bright :
 Away with the foolish thought ! Give me
 Thy soft eyes' loving light.

O woman's face, turn not away
 To heavenly skies and far,
 But be upon earth—yes, every day—
 My heavenly one sweet star.
 Then, when death comes, as come it must,
 Our souls shall not despair :
 We'll love once more in heaven, I trust,
 And both be angels there !

XXVIII.

“TWENTY SUMMERS AGO.”

TWENTY summers ago, my darling,
Twenty summers ago—
All was beautiful then, my darling,
Light and rapture and glow.
You were my own sweet first love, darling,
Queen of the long ago,
Twenty long sad summers behind us,
Twenty summers ago !

Still the waters are blue, my darling,
Still the old streams flow :
Green leaves wave in the woods, my darling,
Whither we used to go.
Have you quite forgotten me, darling ?
Nay, it is hardly so.
Twenty summers are nothing, nothing—
Sunbeams that come and go !

Think of me once to-day, my darling,
As in the long ago.
Think of the suns that shone and vanished
Twenty summers ago.
Dream once more of our youth, my darling,
Dream of it tenderly. Oh,
Sweetly we dreamed—was it really, darling,
Twenty summers ago ?

XXIX.

BLACKBERRY PICKING.

How happy we were in the deep green wood,
Picking blackberries, you and I!
Round us the heather and tall ferns stood :
Over us shone the sky.
Rich and ripe in the bramble-copse
The tempting blackberries gleamed :
In the dark-green feathery fir-tree tops
The wood-doves cooed and dreamed.

Far away is the deep green wood
And the silent ferny glen
Where happy and hand-in-hand we stood,
Craving for nothing then.
Far away that happy day
Seems in the sunlit past :
Why will never a pleasure stay ?
Do only the sad things last ?

Yet in your album safely dried
A heather sprig I see :
The delicate purple tints have died,
But it blossoms still for me.
For the joyous past is never dead,—
No, still the blackberries gleam,
And still in the fir-trees overhead
The wood-doves coo and dream !

xxx.

TRUE LOVE.

WHY did we quarrel, sweetheart mine ?
Have not the long years found us true ?
Can summer sunlight cease to shine ?
Can heaven put off its robes of blue ?
Would it not be yet more absurd
That you and I, so long allied,
Should part in anger at a word,—
We who have faced Fate side by side ?
True love can ne'er be treason ;
True passion cannot cease :
Through change of time and season
True love brings lasting peace.

A hasty word will be forgot,
But all the deeds of love abide :
Love's sacred memories haunt each spot ;
Love's blossoms last when June's have died.
Call back to mind that night we met
Beside the blue Lake of Lucerne :
The mountains loomed out black as jet ;
Through heaven the gold stars seemed to burn.
I asked your heart for ever :
You gave that heart to me.
Shall anger part us ? Never !
To all eternity.

RED LEAVES AND GREEN LEAVES.

WHAT is the whisper of the leaves
 Round ruined turrets reddening fast,
 Or nestling under cottage-eaves
 While autumn winds go sighing past?
 "Life is sorrow," they whisper,
 "Life is only a dream :
 The sky seemed blue, but it was not true ;
 The sky is as grey as the stream ! "

What is the whisper of the heart
 When love and life have ceased to please,
 When passion's fairy dreams depart
 And cold winds rustle through the trees ?
 "Life is trouble," it whispers,
 "Trouble and wild despair :
 Once love seemed bright, but at morning light
 Love's face was no more fair ! "

Yet autumn leaves and troubled soul
 May hardly read life's tale aright :
 Green leaves shall crown the elm-tree bole,
 And love's joy shall outlive the night.
 "Green leaves," the red leaves whisper,
 Fast falling one by one :
 When night's stars die, behold the sky
 Laughs out to see the sun !

II.

BALLADS.

I.

SAILOR AND SOLDIER.

SAID the sailor, "Ours is the life to choose !
We traverse the boundless deep :
We mark the infinite sunsets' hues,
And we watch the pale moon's sleep.
From night to dawn, and from dawn till night,
We travel the ocean-way ;
The sails of our ships, like sea-birds white,
Flash over the waters grey.
Strong and long the wind may roar,
But it only frightens folk ashore."

Said the soldier, "Ours is the life that charms
The heart that is true and bold :
We conquer the world by force of arms ;
Earth's kingdoms we remould.
Your ships must carry us o'er the deep
To the wished-for shore, 'tis true ;
But when we land, the soldier's hand
Must carry the fierce work through.
Steel must heal the world's deep wrongs ;
They cannot be cured by shipmen's songs."

Said England, "Peace! My thousands dead,
Who perished for love of me,
Whether they died in blue or red,
I honour—by land or sea.
Clothed in scarlet, or clothed in black,
Or in labour's homely brown,
If ye toil for the land with brain or hand,
I love, and honour, and crown.
England says to each, 'Well done!'
Taking account of her every son."

II.

THE BRIGHTON COACH.

A YOUNG girl stood by the garden gate
As the Brighton coach flew by ;
The horses tore by the rose-wreathed door,
They passed like a breath, or a sigh.
But there just was time for the girl to see
A lady with bright gold hair.—
“ If only I were as rich as she,
As happy, and half as fair ! ”

That was her sigh as the coach swept by,
As it passed like a lightning gleam ;
But the lady fair, with the bright gold hair,
Had also her longing dream.—
“ I'd give the world to be young like you,
Ay, all that the world's wealth brings,
Beautiful girl with the eyes of blue
And the bonnet with bright green strings.”

So each heart longed. It is always so.
For riches the young heart sighs ;
But the world-worn heart is ready to part
With the empty golden prize.
“ Oh, to be there on the beautiful coach,
Riding in silk and state ! ”
“ Oh, to be you with the eyes of blue,
Girl at the garden gate ! ”

III.

THE OLD RED COAT.

MERELY a tattered coat of red,
With ominous stains on the sleeve.
It belonged to a soldier long since dead ;
He has gone on the long long leave.
He has left the old red coat to his sons—
It is all he had saved, maybe !
The red coat, black with the smoke of the guns,
And pierced by a bullet—see !

And yet, in the unseen days gone by,
How proudly the wearer walked
Through green lanes, under a summer sky,
With his sweetheart ! How they talked !
Bright eyes have gazed at that old red coat,
And moistened a bit, perchance.
As the scarlet gleamed, how the sweet eyes dreamed !
How proud was the maiden's glance !

And then again, in the battle's front,
'Mid the clamour of Waterloo,
How the red coat shone, as our squares, alone,
Stemmed the torrent of charging blue !
Poor faded coat on the cottage wall,
Bright scarlet in days gone by,
You seem hung there to remind us all
That the brightest things must die !

IV.

“I WONDER WHY SHE LINGERED?”

I WONDER why she lingered
Alone, unmarried, long ?
The blackbird in the laurels
Took up her sweetheart's song ;
White may-tree sang to may-tree,
The king-cups wooed the sun,
Bright season followed season,
The bells rang out in none.

For still she lingered lonely ;
I wonder, wonder why ?
So many lovers sought her
With word and look and sigh.
Within the farm-house lonely
She lingered, lingered long—
Her sweet eyes never weary,
And on her lips a song.

So years passed slowly onward,
And grey hairs streaked the black ;
Unwedded still she lingered,
Her eyes kept looking back :
New suitors sought her dwelling,
New spurs clinked in the hall,
But she—she loved the old love,
The old love best of all !

v.

“SHIP AHOY !”

THROUGH waters blue the gallant ship
 Raced swiftly on its way,
 Kissing the waves with iron lip,
 And churning up the spray.
 Young lovers laughed and sang on board,
 And watched the moon at night,
 Or dangled over the stern a cord
 To snare the mackerel bright.
 Each ship they passed they hailed with joy,
 And the sailors sang out, “Ship ahoy !
 Ship ahoy !”

They came to the Cape, and the wind fell dead,
 And the glassy waters gleamed :
 The sun glared down with its eye of red,
 And the windless blue sky dreamed.
 There was never a sail on the ocean wide ;
 Not one white speck was there :
 Not one light rope in the rigging sighed
 In the sultry silent air.
 The ship seemed fixed like a painted toy :
 There was never a voice to shout, “Ship ahoy !
 Ship ahoy !”

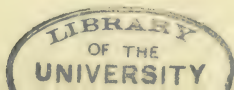
But at night the strength of the wind up-sprang,
And the sea was lashed to white :
The strong spars rattled, the cordage rang,
And the thunder smote the night.
And then there came a spectral ship,
Fast galloping through the dark ;
Ashen-grey grew the helmsman's lip,
For through the midnight—Hark !
Came the phantom pilot's weird shrill cry,
“ All who meet the Phantom ship must die :
Ship ahoy ! ”

VI.

THE SEA'S LAUGHTER.

WITHIN their good ships' walls of wood,
On many a stormy day,
Our fathers and forefathers stood :
They held the world at bay,
Singing, " Let the nations rule the shore,
And sway the corn-clad land ;
On the blue sea's floor for evermore
Old England's foot shall stand !
For the great sea laughed, ' Ha ha ! Ho ho !'
And the Spanish fleet to the bottom did go :
' Ha ha ! Ho ho !' "

To-day our ships are iron-wrought,
And there are those who hold
That England's strength will come to nought,
Sapped by her love of gold.
But still we sing, " Let others place
Their trust in fortress-towers :
Our ships will o'er the billows race ;
The pathless sea is ours.
For the great sea laughs, ' Ha ha ! Ho ho !'
At the fleets of the nations and all their show :
' Ha ha ! Ho ho !' "



When, it may be, we have to meet,
In close-locked deadly fray,
Some giant iron-armoured fleet
That plunges through the spray,
Still we will trust the billows blue
That Nelson loved of yore ;
The sea to England will be true,
Ay, true for evermore !
For the great sea laughs, " Ha ha ! Ho ho !
I'll crush their fleets at a single blow !
Ha ha ! Ho ho ! "

VII.

ONE DAY IN A LIFE.

JUST one day in the hay-field,
One perfect wondrous day.
The azure sky above her !
Round her the scent of may !
Poor little London sparrow—
Just one day 'mid the green,
And then the alley narrow,
The squalid room and mean.

Six hours amid the clover :
Six hours among the lanes :
And then the whole thing's over !
The rest of life remains.
And what a dreary lifetime
That may be, child, for you,—
Passed under smoky rafters,
Not under sunny blue !

One day ! this is the sadness.
The childish eyes grow wide
With wonder and pure gladness
At the sweet country-side.
One day—oh, give them, give them,
These exiles from the sun,
Give all one country airing,
And give them more than one !

VIII.

ACROSS GREY BILLOWS.

THE great ship outward-bound
 Steers past Tintagel's steep :
 The sea-gulls' wild cries sound ;
 The white waves foam and leap.
 Lo ! at the vessel's stern
 One stands with eyes that yearn ;
 His whole soul watches the receding shore.
 He leaves the land for years,
 And thinks with silent tears
 Of one sweet face that he may see no more.

Last night they sat and spoke
 Of days and things to be
 Beneath a green-leafed oak—
 To-day, the wide grey sea !
 "Where is she now ?" he thinks.
 The far land dips and sinks,
 And somewhere past that misty line is home ;
 And he must win his way,
 Must toil from day to day,
 Toil on, for her sweet sake, beyond the foam.

Five years have passed away ;
 His lonely task is o'er :
 He lands again to-day
 Upon the English shore.
 And who is this who waits
 Behind the pier's white gates ?
 The sweet face dreamed of under alien skies.—
 Thank Heaven, the dream is past,
 And she is his at last !
 The long years vanish, as he meets her eyes.

IX.

SISTER ROSES.

"O SISTER," the white rose said to the red,
 "Could only my face be as bright as thine !
I am pale. Could I only be pink instead,
I would lift to the sunlight my beautiful head,
 And never be weary, or weep, or pine !"

"O sister," the red rose said to the white,
 "Could only my face be as pale as thine !
I am doomed to be gathered to-night, to-night,—
I shall faint at a ball in the hot gas-light,
 While you will be glad in the cool moonshine."

"Ah ! sister," the white rose sighed to the red,
 "You are wrong, you are wrong, and the truth is mine.
Far better than life in the dull flower-bed
It is to be worshipped, and then to fall dead
 Where live hearts flutter, and gay lights shine."

x.

SYMPATHY.

SHOT through the heart in a battle !
The smoke and the lurid skies
Around, and the muskets' rattle,
The hoarse-toned shouts and cries ;
The black war-horses leaping
Up to the cannons' rim ;
The dead man fallen and sleeping ;
Does any one grieve for *him* ?

Struck through the heart in a ball-room !
The glitter of lights around ;
Gossiping throngs in the shawl-room ;
Laughter, and music's sound.
Dead in the midst of the laughter,
A girl-face, beautiful, white ;
Gone to the lone hereafter
Straight from the crowded night.

How did it happen, I wonder ?
No one can understand.
Why should the battle's thunder
Echo from land to land ?
An officer dead in the battle ;
Death 'neath the opera-cloak.
—Love is the key to the secret :
They died by the self-same stroke.

LOVE ON DECK.

"I NEVER loved you much," she said,

"But I wanted to pass the time.

The hours pass slow on a ship, you know,

In a lazy tropical clime.

Have I hurt you much? Forgive me then,

If I own that I was wrong.

Cure the smart, and heal your heart,

By writing it all in a song."

The waves flowed free, and the waves flowed wide,

As they sat and whispered side by side.

"I never cared much for you," he said,

"But I wanted a subject fit.

I'd verses to make, and I thought I could take

Your heart, and model from it.

Have I pained you much? Forgive me, dear.

A ship is a dreary place :

It is wrong to flirt, but you aren't much hurt,

And you *have* a lovely face !"

The waves flowed free, and the waves flowed strong,

And the good ship bore them both along.

Each looked at each. They did not smile :

The tears were in either's eyes.

And the cliffs of England rose the while

From the waves, a white surprise.

Hand sought for hand—"Shall we gravely end

What first was a freak of the heart?

Shall we meet once more on the English shore,

But, this time, never to part?"

The cliffs rose white from the sunny seas,

And church bells sounded on the breeze.

XII.

OVER THE WAY.

OVER the way is a lark in a cage,
And he sings from morn till night.
Along the street his song rings sweet,
And it brings the woods to sight.
Through London smoke green thickets of oak
And hazel-copses gleam ;
And I wander along, as I follow his song,
The banks of a silver stream.

So I went one day, went over the way,
The lark singing loud the while,
And said to the owner, " Your bird is a donor
Who gives in a princely style."
But the owner said, " Your creeper red
With its clinging crimson sprays
Has given me hope, when hope seemed dead,
In the dismal autumn days."

Thus each brought blessing in its way.
Of the country one heart dreamed,
As the lark sang to him day by day :
On one the creeper gleamed.—
The lark sang on : the red leaves shone
Through rain and darkness blinding :
In what we heed not, other hearts
Their comfort may be finding.

XIII.

SPRING AND AUTUMN.

“THE rose-tree longs for its beautiful rose,
And sighs till its bloom is there :
So life will never attain repose
Till love its exquisite blossom blows
In the beautiful scented air.”
These dream-sweet words from a poet’s page
A girl to her mother read ;
And the young girl smiled, while the eyes of age
Watched softly the fair gold head.

But the mother’s eyes were dim with tears,
While the daughter’s eyes were gay ;
For the mother thought of the long-past years,
And of dead sweet hopes, and of sighs and fears,
But the young heart dreamed of to-day.
“ And why are you sad ? ” the young voice said,
“ For reading of love is sweet :
O bright-eyed Love, with the lips so red—
I would fall at his darling feet ! ”

Then the mother said : “ Dream on, my child,
For love is a beautiful dream ;
And truly the earth were a desert wild,
Had never the eyes of sweet love smiled
With their wonderful magic gleam.
Smile on : but leave their thoughts to the old,
For the poet’s words that bring
Delight to the young, and a hope untold,
Full oft on the older heart fall cold.
Mine are the grey locks : yours are the gold !
I am autumn : you are the spring ! ”

XIV.

AFTER DEATH.

IT was not death that hurt me—it was this.

On a June evening sweet with balmy air
I gazed from heaven, and saw two lovers kiss,
And heard the man protest, “ My one thing fair !
My blossom rare ! ”

Then all the air of heaven turned freezing cold :

I shuddered,—and I died again indeed.

The face was that sweet face I loved of old.

How could her ears to this man’s words give heed ?
Was this love’s meed ?

His hand stroked gently that black hair I knew—

Knew, worshipped, loved, past human language well.

Then thunder-clouds swept over heaven’s wide blue :

Yea, heaven was there no longer, only hell.

I swooned and fell.

LIFE'S STREAM.

ALONG the golden meadows
 Beneath the early morn
 The bright stream lisps and ripples,
 Beside the fields of corn.
 The streamlet, oh ! the streamlet,
 It has not reached the town ;
 Its epoch of pollution
 Lies lower, lower down.

Then lo ! again our river.
 It washes wharf and pier :
 No more its willows quiver ;
 Another stream is here.
 But yet it carries steamers,
 Poor river, city-bound !
 If other streams were dreamers,
 This makes the mills go round.

And then, far onward glancing,
 You'll see the stream emerge,
 Until with blue waves dancing
 It meets the ocean surge.
 —So, life must start in gladness,
 Must watch that gladness flee,
 Until, past grief and sorrow,
 It mixes with the sea.

SHOREHAM CHURCH.

STORM and sunshine, summer glory,
 August thunder, wintry snow,
 Many a human sweet love-story,
 Many a tale of wrath and woe,—
 Hours of dark funereal anguish,
 Hours when 'neath the summer sun
 Even the flowers he loves must languish,
 Hours when autumn's peace is won—
 All of these the church has known,
 Gazing from its tower of stone ;
 Watching gladness change to grief,
 Golden to the faded leaf.

Witness here to something holier
 Than our cares and strife, it stands.
 Round its turrets time creeps slower
 Than across the changing lands.
 Fields of corn in blood may welter,
 Human cities reek with crime,—
 Here is blessing, here is shelter
 From the sins and shocks of time.
 Human race succeeds to race,
 Still the tower stands in its place.
 "Tremble," cries the wild wind's tongue ;
 But it answers, "I am young !"

Many a lightning-flash, half-grazing,
Threatens,—still the tower, upright,
At the morning sun is gazing,
Scathless, at the stars by night.
Though the soul of man may darken,
Still that grey old tower of stone
To the sunrise-hymn will hearken,
Stand erect, alert, alone,
Facing seasons soft or grim,
Watcher when man's eyes grow dim,
Guardian of man's hopes and fears
Through another thousand years.

XVII.

A BALLAD OF WINTER.

SAID Winter to the Rose :

“ When first my cold breath blows,
Your gentle reign is done.”

But said the Rose quite fearless :

“ New splendid buds and peerless
Are waiting for the sun.”

Said Winter to my love :

“ With fur and muff and glove
Guard thou thyself, or die.”

But said my love : “ What folly !

Though flowers be dead, the holly
Is bright against the sky.”

Said Winter unto me :

“ Take heed, arise and flee ;
Thy strength is spent. Beware ! ”

Said I : “ My love is near me ;

Her bright eyes soothe and cheer me ;
Lo ! June is in the air.”

XVIII.

THE GOLDEN ISLES.

Wonderful golden islands
Of old, so the fable ran,
Lay in the Western Ocean,
Closed from the vision of man.
Wonderful cloudless islets,
Set in a stormless sea ;
Splendid with banks of coral,
Blossom and fruit and tree.

Wonderful magic islands
Ever before us gleam.
Ever we strive to reach them :
Ever they melt in a dream.
Ever we struggle onward
Over the lonely seas :
Never the islands glitter,
Never their fringe of trees !

So it goes on for ever,
What will the issue be ?
Oh, will our vessel never
Traverse this endless sea ?—
If we can reach our dreamland,
What will be waiting there ?
Rapture of noble passion ?
Pallor of white despair ?

THE CITY'S SADNESS.

I HEARD of the city's greatness,
 And I came from afar to see
 The wonderful place called London,
 And its splendour dazzled me.
 Miles of beautiful shop-fronts !
 Glitter and warmth and light !
 The place seemed busy the livelong day,
 And merry the livelong night.
 It seemed like the palace Aladdin built,
 All marble and jewels, painted and gilt.

But I closer looked, and the glory
 Faded ; it was but a show.
 Black fog fell over the city
 In lieu of the sunlight's glow :
 And I saw, in the mist-clothed places
 Where all had appeared so bright,
 Weary and half-starved faces,
 Sorrow by day and by night.
 The city that once had shone so fair
 Seemed full of a horror of fierce despair.

I looked yet again, and a measure
 Of hope returned to me.
 I saw, and I took deep pleasure
 In a blossoming lilac tree.
 And I saw two lovers sitting
 Side by side in the Park :
 Then I saw the red moon flitting
 Over the Thames in the dark,
 And I knew that even on London town
 The stars and the beautiful moon smile down.

"IF I WERE AS OLD AS YOU!"

"If only I were as old as you,"
So said a child to me,
A child with eyes of fearless blue
Bright as the morning sea.
"If only I were as old as you,
With a great big beard and a hat"—
"Yes, my darling, what would you do?"
"I'd buy an owl and a cat!"

"I'd buy an owl and a cat," he said,
"And a string of amber beads,
And a soldier's suit of splendid red,
And do tremendous deeds.
I'd buy a ship, and a new toy-gun,
If I were as old as you,
And a helmet flashing like the sun,
With a plume of lovely blue!"

Such simple things! In later days
Does anything bring the joy
That a ship and a gun, or a cracker's blaze,
Brings to an eager boy?
Whatever I buy, I hear that cry,
"If I were as old as you,
I'd soon have a helmet like the sun,
With a plume of lovely blue!"

THE COMPACT.

"If only I were a man," she said,
 "What wonderful deeds I'd do !
 With a general's plume, and a coat of red,
 I'd harry my foes till my foes fell dead,
 And I'd travel the wide world through.
 Sword in hand, I'd traverse the land
 (How I hate this ivory fan !)—
 Hearts should ache, and hearts should break,
 If only I were a man !"

"If only I were a girl," he said,
 "How pleasant this life might be.
 Lovely dresses of Indian red !
 Beautiful bonnets and caps on my head !
 Beautiful men to tea !
 How I would flirt, at dinner, dessert
 (Head-dress of ruby and pearl !)—
 That would be brave. What a time I would have,
 If only I were a girl !"

They looked at each other, and laughed outright :
 Brown eyes laughed into the grey.
 Then he said, "And why should the dream take flight?
 Marry me, darling, and we'll unite
 Our powers,—the world we'll sway !"
 Grey eyes smiled back their "Yes" to the brown
 (And she played with the hated fan)—
 "I think that I'm glad I'm a girl," she said,
 "Now I'm loved by a love of a man !"

CROSS-PURPOSES.

"I WOULD have given you love," said I,
 "Flowers of the earth and stars of the sky :
 Thoughts like stars, and love like a flower,
 Blossoms fit for a queen's own dower,
 Gifts that a king might long to see"—
 "Buy me this diamond brooch," said she.

"Dreaming still of the earth?" said I.
 "You—why I thought you came from the sky !
 Thought you a fairy, deemed you a queen ;
 Earth for your footstep seemed too mean.
You to ask for a brooch from me"—
 "Buy me that necklace then," said she.

Star-dreams flash through the poet's head :
 Woman looks at the shops instead.
 The lover dreams in his lady's eyes ;
 But the lady does not dream—she buys.
 "Brighter than stars are your eyes," thinks he—
 "Eighteen and threepence, dear," says she.

XXIII.

BIRDS AND BLOSSOMS.

“ LOVE is a beautiful thing,” she said,
“ For a poet to sing about ;
And the dreams that haunt a poet’s head
Are beautiful dreams no doubt.
But what is the value of love to me,
If it bring not wealth in its hand ?
I like a present that I can *see*,
And a gift I can understand ! ”

So she said—and the skylark ceased in his song,
And the lilies’ heads hung low :
The birds and the blossoms knew she was wrong,
But they could not help her—No !
She went her way, and she drank her fill
Of pleasure the world’s wealth brings ;
Till at last she grew old, and she hated her gold,
And she hated her diamond rings.

“ What did he speak of ? ” then she said ;
“ What did the poet say ?
Did he speak of a love that is never dead ?
Can I win that love to-day ? ”
And again the birds and blossoms heard,
And they sighed from hedge and spray,
For never again can you win true love
When once you have thrown it away.

XXIV.

THE GOLDEN CARP.

FISHING ! fishing ! fishing !
The old man sits in a dream ;
Wishing ! wishing ! wishing !
Watching his float on the stream.
Minnows and roach and gudgeon
Lie in heaps by his side ;
But he scowls like an old curmudgeon,
He never seems satisfied.

So I passed through the open gateway,
By a copse of larch and fir,
And I asked the old man straightway,
“ What are you fishing for, sir ? ”
And he said, with his features working
And a keen look strange and sharp,
“ Do you see in the rushes lurking
That monstrous golden carp ? ”

And I looked, and I saw the willows,
And I saw the rushing stream—
I marked the blue swift billows,
But I saw no golden gleam.
Ah me ! he has fished for ever
(And we all of us do the same)
For a prize that glittered never,
For a carp that never came.

AUTUMN LEAVES.

WHAT do the red leaves whisper ?
What do the wild winds say,
When they wail and roar o'er hill and shore
On a stormy autumn day ?
 " The past was sweet with flowers,
 And beautiful was June ;
But now on leafless bowers
 Looks down the lonely moon."

What do our sad hearts utter ?
What do our spirits cry,
When autumn hues at length suffuse
Vale, hill, and wood, and sky ?
 " Love's summer heart was tender,
 But summer glory goes,
And Love forgets the splendour
 He once loved in the rose."

“SHE WAS BUT A CHILD.”

SHE was but a child, I know it,
 A woman and child in one :
 A woman with childlike sweetness,
 And gold hair like the sun.
 She was but a child, so I thought her,
 In spite of her wedding-ring ;
 So I treated her half as a daughter,
 And half as a useless thing.

She was but a child in feeling,
 She was but a child in heart ;
 She gathered the red corn-poppies,
 She cared not a whit for Art.
 I watched her, and yet in my madness
 I never could understand
 Why she sometimes sighed for sadness
 As her warm hand pressed my hand

A snowdrop 's only a snowdrop !
 A rose is only a rose !
 Each easily fades and withers
 If ever a rough wind blows.
 So, softly the child's heart faded ;
 She never was strong, you see ;
 And I—I shall never be able
 To show what she was to me.

HARROW HILL.

O GREEN old slopes of Harrow Hill
 That countless hearts remember,
 Those hearts are often near you still ;
 Bright May can touch December.
 O Harrow Hill, green Harrow Hill,
 What thousands April-hearted
 Have paced your slopes ! They love you still,
 Though young dreams have departed.

O green old slopes of Harrow Hill,
 Which English elms environ,
 One deathless shadow haunts you still—
 The mighty shade of Byron.
 The soul in him to greatness grew
 Upon your greensward dreaming ;
 Though Harrow skies then little knew
 The star within them gleaming.

O green old slopes of Harrow Hill
 All change and storm outliving,
 In hearts of those who love you still
 What memories are surviving !
 O fair green slopes, so bright with hopes
 By countless young hearts cherished,
 Old hearts will still love Harrow Hill,
 Though countless hopes have perished !

III.

RELIGIOUS LYRICS.

I.

“THINE EYES SHALL SEE THE KING!”

THINE eyes shall see the King.

When earth's wild wastes are trod,

Thine eyes shall look on God :

Winter shall cease, and change to heavenly spring—

Thine eyes shall see the King in his beauty,

Thine eyes shall see the King !

Him shall thine eyes behold.

When sorrow's overpast

Him shalt thou see at last,

And tread with him the heavenly courts of gold—

Thine eyes shall see the King in his beauty,

Thine eyes shall see the King !

Thine eyes shall see the King.

The Vision surely waits

Beyond death's solemn gates,

Awful with light that only death can bring :

Thine eyes shall see the King in his beauty,

Thine eyes shall surely see the King.

LIGHT IN DARKNESS.

SUFFERER, though thy path be dark,
 Though no starlight thou mayest mark,
 Though the days bring deepening pain
 And love's old sweet hopes seem vain,
 Though thine eve belie thy morn,
 Though thy brows be pierced with thorn,
 Though thy path lie through the night,
 Christ thy Lord shall be thy Light !

Youth, round whom the sunlight gleams,
 Passing through the vale of dreams,
 Faint the mountains seem and far,
 Flowers in myriads round thee are.
 Yet thou needest Christ to guard !
 Soon thy pathway may be barred
 By an host as yet concealed :
 Then thou needest Christ for Shield !

Youth and age indeed are one :
 Each needs Christ for star and sun ;
 Christ for shield, and crown, and sword ;
 Christ's sweet welcome for reward.
 When the golden gateways shine,
 Then may Christ with voice divine
 Say to each, " Thou needst not fear ;
 We were waiting for thee here ! "

III.

HEAVENLY WHISPERS.

HARDLY one sad soul is friendless ;
Somewhere glows a kindred heart ;
Yes, though dreary days seem endless,
Though sad springs on springs depart.
If the rich man in his garden
Breathes the incense of the rose,
For the poor man at his window
White and pure the snowdrop blows.

Ay, if every friend hath vanished,
If our silent hearth be lone,
Angel-whispers are not banished,
Dearer yet the dead have grown.
Is there one sad soul who hears not
From the land beyond the grave
Loving voices, gentle whispers,
As of souls who yearn to save ?

And if even these we hear not,
If the depth of heaven be gloom,
If the angel-voices cheer not,
Sound not from beyond the tomb,
Still no soul is friendless wholly ;
Each one who the earth hath trod
Hath one Friend, one Friend undying,—
Every soul is dear to God.

CHURCH-BELLS.

THE church-bells rang, and the skylark sang,
 On a beautiful morn in May ;
 And a mother and son walked side by side,
 And the boy's gold head was the joy and the pride
 Of the mother's heart that day.
 They opened the worn old churchyard gate,
 And a sunbeam shot from the sky,
 And its glory was shed on the boy's gold head
 And it tinted the daisies tipped with red
 And the buttercup-fields hard by.

Long years passed by, and the boy became
 A soldier of fortune bold :
 Through the East his fame flashed on like a flame,—
 He feathered his nest, and he played his game,
 And won renown and gold.
 But his hands were stained with sin and crime,
 Ay, red with blood, some say :
 'Neath the Indian sun wild deeds were done,
 And a dark and an evil name was won
 As the gold hair grew to grey.

The church-bells rang, and a skylark sang,
 On a beautiful morn in May ;
 By a tomb-stone white in the morning light
 Stood a lonely man, and the sun was bright
 Not on gold hair now but on grey.
 His swift thoughts flew o'er the fifty years,
 And a sunbeam shot from the air
 As he stood by his mother's grave in tears ;
 And the church-bells whispered in his ears,
 " It is never too late for prayer ! "

THE PAST AND THE PRESENT.

IN the olden days Christ walked on earth ;
 He gave the blind their sight ;
 He changed man's sorrow of heart to mirth ;
 He spake : the dark grew light.
 He lifted man to the heaven above,
 And brought God down to man :
 He showed that all things worked through love,
 Revealed creation's plan.

"But now," we cry, "no Christ is here
 To help our world along ;
 Without his hand at the helm, we steer
 Through billows dark and strong.
 Our sad ones sigh. No help is nigh :
 When will our blind folk see ?
 Was all the love that flows from above
 Reserved for Galilee ?"

Nay, 'tis not so. Love cannot die ;
 Christ visits every land :
 To the sufferer's couch through the moonlit sky
 He comes with his healing hand.
 Wherever faith and love are met,
 At morn or at evening dim,
 A seat for a heavenly Guest is set
 And true hearts wait for him.

VI.

THE SEA'S MESSAGE.

FAR from the inland regions
Where flowers in myriads grow,
In pale or rose-pink legions,
With robes of flame or snow,
Far from the forests shaking
Their gloomy crests inland,
We seek the sea-waves breaking
Along the golden sand.

To all whose souls are weary,
To all whose souls are sad
With piteous days or dreary,
To all whose hearts are glad,
The great sea's soul has spoken,
The great sea brings release ;
And even hearts half-broken
Win something of its peace.

The weariest-hearted mortal
Finds somewhat of repose,
When through the brain's tired portal
The kindly sea-wind blows.
To mortal goal it tends not :
Its blue waves tell the shore
Tales of some life that ends not,
Ay, life for evermore !

GOLDEN SHEAVES.

THROUGH spring and summer we toil and slave,
 We suffer and strive and dream ;
 Our ships fly over the sunbright wave,
 Far, far as the waters gleam.
 We struggle and wrestle for wealth and gold :
 Though many a hope deceives,
 Yet some men triumph as life grows old
 And gather their golden sheaves—
 Sheaves of silver and sheaves of gold,
 Glorious golden sheaves !

But what is the sheaf that ever abides,
 That never can fade or pass ?
 That perishes not when Time derides
 The blossoms and sundried grass ?
 Love is the beautiful golden sheaf
 That grows with the autumn leaves :
 Yes, all true lovers, when Time slays grief,
 Shall gather their golden sheaves—
 Beautiful golden sheaves of love,
 Beautiful golden sheaves !

When sheaves of silver and sheaves of gold
 Shall crumble and rust and die,
 Love's beautiful sheaf shall ne'er grow old,—
 It is garnered and stored on high.
 Faith delivers the heart from fear,
 And the righteous soul believes
 That all who have toiled in the corn-fields here
 Shall gather their golden sheaves—
 Shall gather their golden sheaves in heaven,
 Infinite golden sheaves !

VIII.

LITTLE THINGS.

ART thou powerless, friend, for much ?

Every heart can bless ;

Every loving look and touch

Makes life's sorrow less.

Psalms are in the ocean's swell,

But the brooklet charms as well

With its laughter light.

Life and love pursue the sun,

Yet what starry work is done

In the purple night :

Stars complete his task begun

Through the purple night.

Every little helps along,

Cheers and lifts and speeds,—

Note of wren and robin's song,

Lisp of river-reeds.

Not so much the queenly rose

Gives the wearied heart repose

As the daisy trim.

Is the road the Master trod

Over-hard for less than God ?

Thou canst gaze at him :

Where he triumphed, thou canst plod

Humbly after him.

IX.

A FAIRY GARDEN.

LIFE was all a fairy garden
When we walked in childhood's ways,—
Starlit nights of happy dreaming,
Sunshine through the golden days.
But the moments passed, and left us
Somewhat weary, every one ;
And each year of life bereft us
Of some further gleam of sun.

God had given us in our childhood
A pure angel from his skies
To watch over childish footsteps,—
And his love beamed from her eyes.
Ah ! how many an angel-mother
Here has tarried for awhile,
Then has left us,—and no other
Has the sweetness of her smile !

But another angel finds us :
God will leave us not alone.
Somewhat of a mother's sweetness
Soundeth in a younger tone.
God, who knew our childhood's dangers,
Knew the weariness of life,
Sent the child the mother-angel,—
Sends the man the angel-wife !

LIFE'S PATH.

LIFE's path winds ever upward ;
 'Tis no use looking back :
 The flowers we love and long for
 Are further on the track.
 Not in the old green valleys
 Our haven can be found,
 But where the North wind sallies
 Across rough mountain ground.
 Then ho ! for noble climbing.
 Life's work is not yet done :
 Our work will not be over
 Till the last peak is won.

Yes, ho ! for noble climbing,
 And effort pure and high.
 The green seductive valleys
 Fade out from heart and eye.
 The mountains, ho ! the mountains—
 Our path lies over these ;
 We quit the valley-fountains,
 We quit the flowers and trees.
 We struggle ever upward :
 Upon the mountain's crest,
 But never till we reach it,
 Our weary souls may rest.

“HOME AT LAST!”

LONG years of grief and sighing !
 Wild' seasons of unrest !
 Hope blooming,—straightway dying
 On Winter's frozen breast !
 Through storm and strife God steers us,
 Till storm and strife be past :
 This one thought ever cheers us—
 We shall win home at last,
 Home at last !

God's dice are always loaded.—
 Not fruitless is the pain
 Of one flower-bud corroded
 By harsh November's rain.
 God brings the singing season,
 And tunes the thrush's lute,
 In spite of Winter's treason
 Who gazes blank and mute,
 Blank and mute !

Through all the storms God leads us,
 And leads the years that wane :
 The Love eternal heeds us,
 And changes grief to gain.
 Time lines and grooves our features ;
 Pain wears our spirits fast :
 But God will bring his creatures
 All safely home at last,
 Home at last !

XII.

THE VOICE OF THE RIVER.

THE river was ever a siren :
It sings to the reed-fringed shore ;
It sings to the floating lilies,
And they love it more and more.
When the autumn leaves are golden
It gathers them all to its wave :
It takes, but it never tells them
That its waters are deep as the grave !

And it sings with a siren sweetness
As it eddies to and fro
To fairer things than blossoms,
With its tempting cold dark flow.
And some there are who listen,
And they plunge in the cold deep wave :
One moment the gold locks glisten—
But the moonlight cannot save !

But oh, there are voices sweeter
Than the river's siren tone !
Not even the saddest outcast
In the moonlight stands alone !
For the face of Christ in the moonlight
Shines out over the wave,
And he saith to the saddest of mortals,
“ It was you that I came to save.”

XIII.

LIFE'S LAST GIFT.

A THOUSAND gifts life brings us,
And some are passing fair :
What perfect flowers it flings us
When June's breath scents the air !
Yes, life begins with pleasure :
The year begins with glee ;
With golden blossom-treasure
And stormless azure sea.

Then how the prospect darkens :—
Hearts fail us, and betray ;
Death glides amid our loved ones,—
Steals one by one away :
Life, which began in glory,
Grows sombre towards its close,
For old age chills our pleasures
As autumn chills the rose.

But one thing life will bring us
In autumn days and cold :
October's lips can tell us
What August never told.
Life's latest gift is fairer
In that all past gifts cease ;
Life's last gift is supremest,
For life's last gift is peace.

III.

MISCELLANEOUS POEMS.

DEATH.

THE mantle of a vast exceeding peace
Over the lonely wandering poet fell :
The noises of the worldly war did cease,
And all was well.

Some understood him better, now that death
Had folded round him its embrace secure,
And breathed upon him with its awful breath,
Most sweet, most pure.

The women who had followed through wild ways
With love and longing in most tender hands,
Brought him his roses and his wreath of bays,
Plucked in lone lands.

But over him fell sweet unbroken sleep,
And rest divine that nought could change or mar ;
One woman watched his grave with great grand deep
Gaze like a star.

Nought moved her from his grave. His other queens
Sought other pleasures—bought and sold and slept ;
But still, where over him the grey stone leans,
This woman wept.

They found her there one summer morning dead
Beneath the solemn marriage-sealing sun,
To his live endless deathless spirit wed,—
So these were one.



UNCOMPANIONED.

At war with all the human race,
Where shall I turn my tired-out face?

The meadow-sweet hath sun and air :
What hath the poet? Grim despair.

The sea hath wind and storm and light :
What hath the poet? Starless night.

Woman hath love and roses' breath :
What hath her poet? Pain and death.

ONE WOMAN.

THEY knew him not.—Do blossoms understand
The hand that plucks them and that finds them fair ?
Do the waves apprehend the steadfast land ?

The birds, the air ?

They knew him not, although their tender eyes
Seemed sometimes with soft passionate haze to swim ;
Although with gracious words and gentle guise
They followed him.

What *can* the blossoms understand of fire ?
The gentle doves of swift devouring flame ?
But one great heart was great as his desire :
One woman came.

One fiery spirit smote his own with light,
And stood before him and was not afraid ;
Most passionate, yet most pure ; most strong, yet white ;
Divinely made.

They mingled each with each in awful sleep,
And knew each other's very inmost soul ;
Then parted—like great sundering waves that leap
Lone to the goal.

But still they bore away the flame and fire
Of each ; through each the other's force was poured.
The one was strengthened with sublime desire,
Renewed, restored :

The other's heart was softened as he lay
Within the woman's arms so grand and pure ;
And one white rose of love he bore away,
That shall endure.

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And ever in sorrow this great woman's heart
Was with him, when the others fled and failed.
Hard at him lunged grim pain's remorseless dart :
She never quailed.

And when his hair with all the night's harsh dew
Was wet, she stood beside him in the field ;
Stood, till once more heaven's midday cloudless blue
Burned on his shield.

And she would wind about him tender hands,
And bring him blossoms fairer than a dream,
And lift his spirit towards immortal lands
Where great suns beam.

Her heart was not as common hearts that glow,
Then in one day the ephemeral rapture fades ;
But she was one with him through joy and woe—
Through sunlit glades

And through the dark defiles of sin and death
She helped her singer on his perilous way,
Making the lone vales blossom with her breath,
Making night day.

For she, immortal and of ceaseless charm,
Knew how to wake to might or lull to sleep :
Ever within the circle of her arm
Was rapture deep.

Red bloom of sin and terror drove her not
From the sad singer's weary side in fear :
She cleansed his life from fleck and stain and spot,
With many a tear.

Nought severed,—but the eternal souls were one,
And shall be, while the ages speed or creep :
Through flight of moon, and race of fiery sun ;
• Till all stars sleep.

ART'S MARTYRS.

O QUEEN of all Art's martyrs, who bestowest
 Their more than mortal crown
And ever in their inmost spirits glowest,
 Be gracious and look down.
Look down upon thy toiling sons and daughters,
 And lend thy holy aid ;
For lo ! we struggle, tossed by wild white waters,
 And perish in cold shade.
Yea, for a season thou our queen art gracious,
 And then the vision grows
Dimmer and more dim, and thy woodlands spacious
 Made sweet with breath of rose
Fade slowly, and thy sacred golden portal
 Is closed, and all dreams sleep ;
And we who in thy presence were immortal
 Are chained in darkness deep.
Grant us thine help unfailing and redeeming,
 Support us through the night ;
Shine thou upon us with thy soft eyes dreaming,
 And with thy bosom bright.
To every rose thou art the sweet white sister,
 To every flower the bloom :
No lily is white but thou more white hast kissed her,
 And lent her heart-perfume.
And we who are oft-times weary and heart-broken
 Lift up our souls to thee.
Though all men scorn us, yet we have for token
 Thy smile and thy blue sea.

Thy waves we have, and all thy winds and seasons
Of snow and rain and sun :
Clothed round about with these, we face man's treasons
Till all our race is run.

Thou touchest us, and all the tumult ceases,
And we are rocked to rest :
Our foemen's swords are snapped in helpless pieces,—
Shorn is their every crest.

Yea, though the day be long and full of labour,
At even give us light :

Though pain to weariness be closest neighbour,
And friends and lovers smite,

Yet grant us silent hope and endless patience ;
Be with us in the gloom :

More than reward for speechless tribulations
Is one breath of thy bloom—

One sound upon the waves of thy soft laughter,
One vision of thy feet

Upon the enraptured shore,—though death leapt after
That deathless vision sweet.

Ours be the thorns and thine the flowers, but love us,
Forsake us not, O queen !

Bend in thine holy midnight sky above us,
And in thy white clouds' sheen ;

And in the murmur and rush of many waters
When the autumn breezes smite

The seas, speak thou to thy sad sons and daughters
Who struggle towards thy light.

And strengthen us, that nought may move or turn us
From Art's one holy way ;

Though cold nights chill and blazing noontides burn us,
And dark foes seek to sway.

Yea, though we stand forlorn of mortal aiding,
Yet are we not forlorn,
Nor wholly left to man's malign upbraiding
And senseless ceaseless scorn ;

For, though alone, we are not alone when splendid
Thou shatterest with thy might
The darkness round us like tomb-sides extended,
And lo ! the dark is light.

And lo ! the music of thy coming lingers
Like dawn upon the seas,
And at the touching of thy tremulous fingers
Thy harp sounds through the breeze.

And we are saved, and all our hearts are gladdened
Through which the world's spears sprang ;
We who were mocked and disbelieved and maddened,
Though still we fought and sang.

But now more heavenlike than the heaven of heaven
Wherein God sits with thee
Thou springest forth, with breath more sweet than even
In summer o'er the sea,

And power as God's, O Beauty, and full measure
Of joy within thy hands
That shed repose and sleep, like poured-out treasure,
O'er sleepless seas and lands.

And o'er us too falls in the old sweet fashion
A sorrowless soft dream
Wherethrough, intense as God's, divine with passion,
Thine eyes, most fiery, gleam.

“HE WILL NOT KNOW!”

He will not know,—not if he holds her fast
With stalwart straining arms about her cast,
 He will not have the heart to be aware,—
He will not know them, as my soul divines,
Though absent, all the white throat's tender lines,
 And fondles in a dream the dark pure hair
 —He will not know !

He will not know,—as my desire has known
The soft inflection of each silver tone,
 And heard it at a distance on the breeze.
He will not answer her unspoken thought,
Because through very love his soul has caught
 The sense of hers till with her eyes he sees
 —He will not know !

He will not value over-much her face,
Save for the simpler more apparent grace
 That any passer-by can apprehend.
One petal he shall pluck—the perfect flower
With all its scent is mine till life's last hour,
 For love shall tarry steadfast to the end,
 Love shall not go !

UPON THE PIER AT NIGHT.

I WATCH the silent night fall o'er the sea.—
Is this strange sombre mantle, Death, like thee?
Doth this dim starless void
Whence the faint breath of summer air floats meward
Hold all the souls whose wings have travelled seaward,
By the awful deep decoyed?

Where are the myriad souls who went before,—
Who watched the same seas break on the same shore,
Then trusted Death and went?
Sometimes an army on the golden beach
Encamps, with hum of multitudinous speech :
The next day, not one tent!

The next day not one white-topped tent is seen :
Only the white-topped billows dark and green,
And the dark threatening skies.
The foot-prints of the host are on the shore,
But the bright-armoured warriors mix no more ;
No shouts, and no replies.

Can there be room in the celestial fields
For such a concourse of gay swords and shields?
Would all the stars provide
Home for the increasing countless ranks of these,—
Or all the untravelled dark-blue billowy seas
Of heaven, from side to side?

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Nor only human souls have gone.—The flowers
Have sent their delegates from woods and bowers
 To try the land of death :
To bring back tidings whether sister-stems
Within that land wave petalled diadems,
 And mingle fragrant breath.

Armies of blossoms past all mortal thought
Since sinless Eden's stainless bloom was wrought
 Have dared the fatal track :
And of these blossoms not one single rose
Breathes answer to our doubt. No harebell throws
 One faint blue petal back.

The winds of night come scented from afar,
As though from worlds where deathless blossoms are :
 Their souls pervade the breeze.
But never flower from that far land returns ;
No violet-messengers, no risen ferns,
 No flushed anemones.

And yet the land where these dead blossoms meet
Must surely be beyond all gardens sweet,
 Beyond all woodlands fair.
The land whereto our loved ones, smiling, passed
Cannot be lonely. Though the land be vast,
 We shall be welcomed there.

TEN YEARS.

TEN years of flowers and songs and seas :
What profit hath the soul of these ?
What spirit of gladness in the trees
 Abideth ever ?
What hath the soul the force to clasp
In swift undying eager grasp,—
Yea, hold though death's rough fingers rasp,
 And part with never ?

What hath the soul the power to take,
As new bright crimson mornings break
And in the breeze the rushes shake
 And laugh for gladness ?
What lingereth of the loves who went
Adown life's valleys well content,
And with the sacred sunsets blent
 Their share of sadness ?

Now all the suns have passed away
And left life's valleys gaunt and grey,
What word of hope is left to say,
 What word of greeting ?
Ten years of bowers and rose-sweet days,
And sorrow's tears in hidden ways,
And tender honey-suckle sprays—
 How swift, how fleeting !

Ten years have passed : their flowers have fled ;
Their every gallant rose is dead ;
Not one now lifts a laughing head,

High gazing sunward.

The blue seas shine,—but not the seas
Which rippled 'neath the ten years' breeze :
The green leaves quiver, and the trees

Pass sunlight onward.

But what remains of flowers, or sweet
Gold crowns of tender cliff-side wheat ?
What white hands for our hands to meet,

Hands sweet as clover ?

What bowers of beauty yet remain,
Unsmitten by the ten years' rain ?
What lips for eager lips to gain,

Now all is over ?

Death looms in front. What loves behind
Breathe passion on the balmy wind !

What shall our further footsteps find

Of splendid passion ?

What rose sublime upon the track
Waits, nobler than the flowers we lack
And yearn for, burn for, gazing back

In eager fashion ?

No days had value, save the days
When love's foot trod the flowerful ways :
No flowers are sweet, save those that raise

Soft heads resplendent

Towards love's caressing subtle hand
Which brings delight to sea and land,
Adorns with bloom the barren strand

On love dependent.

If this be so, what future waits
Our heart beyond the ten years' gates ?
What new loves, passions, sorrows, hates,
 Swift disappointment ?
What tenderest resting through the night
On very love's soft bosom white ?
What climbing towards a kingly height ?
 What proud anointment ?

The hand of death, it may be, gleams,
Ending all loves and hopes and dreams,
Where some not far-off morning beams ;
 Death's hand there lingereth.
Eager, a foeman sinewy, tall,
He summons without bugle-call ;
And while he grimly waiteth all,
 His sword he fingereth.

But there are fingers sweeter far
Than death's cold grisly fingers are :
Beneath no sun, beneath night's star,
 The soft hand waiteth.
It toucheth like a touching rose,
And sends the tingling blood in throes
Past speaking sweet through heart that glows
 As pain abateth.

And there are flowers that blossom still
In green secluded vale, or fill
With sweetness all the thymy hill,
 Though gone for ever
Are ten years' buds and ten years' bloom—
Swallowed within the unopening tomb,
Whose fierce lips seize each year's perfume
 And yield it never.

And there are faces tender yet,
Though gone past hope are those we met
When still the morning dews were wet

On fern and daisy.

Though now life's noon sucks up the dew,
And cloudless burns the midday blue,
Love's bloom of face hath sweeter hue
Than morn-tints hazy.

Oct. 20, 1880.

PHASES.

OUR spirits progress by phases.

We see for a moment—out
The red sun suddenly blazes :
Then darkness closes about.—
But the phase is not the completeness ;
The portion is not the whole ;
Man's sorrow is not God's sweetness ;
Man's spirit is not God's soul.

However lovely the morning,
It may be dark at noon ;
Clouds, without word or warning,
May strangle the white-throat moon.—
But God is beyond the changes :
Ay, ever beyond the phase
His infinite fancy ranges ;
He lives in the coming days.

He takes delight in the flowers
Of glad Junes yet to be :
When the black cloud frowns and lowers,
He watches the bright blue sea.
We stand by the beach in our sorrow ;
We mark the tossing ship :
God sees the sun to-morrow
Fondle the lily's lip.

So ever it is.—Our phases
Are personal, mortal, small.
God's thought is a-rose to our daisies ;
It ever transcends them all.
In the light of our pale moon-neighbour
Half earth's work is done :
God, beyond sorrow and labour,
Lives in the light of the sun.

LOVE-SONNETS.

SONNET I.

THE POET'S MISSION.

BE gentle with me ; for thou knowest not yet
The utter need there is in me of love.
Oh ! though the poets' brows, bay-crowned above,
Shine famously,—look close, their eyes are wet.
The sorrow of all the earth God's hand has set
Upon them for a wreath,—and in strange fashion
To understand in soul earth's every passion :
For this it is that earth is in their debt.

What the slow heartless lover cannot feel,
The poet feels for him ; and tear-drops steal
Adown his cheeks when others cannot sorrow.
What wonder then if sometimes in his heart
There is a yearning he cannot impart,
And sweet would seem a night without a morrow !

SONNET II.

LOVE'S ENDLESSNESS.

MORE, more, had I the power, my soul would do.—
 Am I content,—till all thy soul is bright
 With God's own passionate unearthly light,
 And on thy forehead all God's heaven of blue
 Set like a jewel? Lo! I would renew
 Thy soul, long-lost amid the pathless night,—
 Be thine eternal champion in the fight,—
 Turn thee from false ends towards love's purpose true.
 O love, thou knowest me not! My love hath lightened
 From end to end of heaven, and heaven hath brightened;
 It is a tender gift:—it is a sword
 To cut all chains and armlets that surround thee.
 Astray thou wast,—but lo! thy love hath found thee.
 Rise. Thou art free to meet thy rightful lord.

SONNET III.

THE UNION IN NATURE AND IN MUSIC.

THINE own soul is of Nature's realm a part,
 And so we meet within that wide domain:
 Our lips touch in the ripples of the rain,
 Ocean's is our own ever-beating heart.—
 Thou crownest me with love. I with mine Art
 Crown thee, and with the music of my strain,
 And with my inmost soul's thorn-crown of pain,
 And with the dreams that through my spirit dart.
 Beneath the sacred stars our spirits meet
 In union wonderful and calm and sweet;
 But most of all when music floods the place
 With its strange amorous rapture passing fair,
 I feel the touch upon me of thine hair,
 And sink into thy soul's superb embrace.

SONNET IV.

SUPREME DESOLATION.

IF thou wert dead, O love,—if thou wert dead,—
 How could one summer sunset dare to gleam
 Above the ripples of the rosied stream ?
 How could one rose blush into mocking red ?
 If death's wreath whitened round thy dear dark head
 I feel that I could never sing again ;
 For thou art as the fountain of my strain,
 Whence buoyant waters towards the plains are led.
 If thou wert gone, O love,—if thou wert gone,—
 How could the thoughtless heartless sun shine on !
 How could the same chant fill the sea's dull soul,
 And thy same crested waves without thee roll !
 Would not life's last and sweetest hope have fled,
 If thou wert dead,—O love, if thou wert dead !

SONNET V.

COMPENSATION.

WE give to others—give them day by day
 Of our hearts' best : we strengthen and make whole :—
 We soothe the sorrows of the weary soul ;
 We pour our spirits in eager help away.
 But for the strength our stronger souls convey
 To theirs, what do they bring ? What glad return
 Of strength is given us when our own hearts burn,—
 When we lie sleepless till the morning grey ?
 If we shield others, God behind us stands,
 A strength perpetual, a surpassing power,
 And guards us with invincible great hands :
 He seeks us out in sorrow's loneliest hour,
 And gives us, for our fellows' sympathy,
 The sun's kiss and the friendship of the sea.

SONNET VI.

THE GLORY OF SUMMER.

THE glory of Summer with its banks of rose
 And fields of blossoms, and its moonlit night
 Flooded with marvellous entrancing light,
 And dewy plains wherever Love's foot goes,
 Is as our sacred love—wherethrough there glows
 Passion, divine, and limitlessly bright :
 Passion which deepens as the hours take flight ;
 Passion which scorns the pale thought of repose.
 In all the life of Summer we are one :
 One in its splendour and triumphant power ;
 One with its every star and leaf and flower
 And moon and wave and cloudless heaven and sun ;
 One with it in its most luxuriant hour,
 And in its sorrow,—when its life is done.

SONNET VII.

THE CALM OF AUTUMN.

THEN Autumn comes,—and the wild woods retain,
 Sighing, their golden splendour for awhile,
 Maddened at heart for lack of Summer's smile
 And all the reckless glory of her reign.
 Calm settles down o'er valley, hill, and plain,
 And quiet meadow and red-leaved defile,—
 And fair blue glimpses in the skies beguile,
 Nor yet the first frost stiffens in the lane.
 The calm of Autumn round our brows we bind,
 Love, for a circlet. Not the summer day
 Brought more of peace than this sky cold and grey
 And this soft-whispering faint unfiery wind,
 And, in the West, the sunset's tender rose,
 Wherethrough the soul of all past passion glows.

SONNET VIII.

FAITHFULNESS.

IN what strange places have our spirits met !—
 Sometimes upon the green downs high and bare ;
 Sometimes amid the tossed sea's stormy air ;
 Sometimes in gladness ; often in regret.
 Only one thing has happened never yet,—
 That I should call, and thou shouldst not be there !
 Desire,—and find no answer to my prayer ;—
 I owe thy faithfulness a ceaseless debt.

Such woes we have conquered, and such barriers scaled,
 And after such defeats have risen upright,
 That, if hell's fiery storm-bolts round me hailed,
 I should expect thee to divide that night,
 And, vainly by the lurid ghosts assailed,
 To bring me, with thyself, the old delight !

ODE TO DEATH.

I.

WHEN all the pleasant days of love are past ;
When in life's autumn garden lo ! the last
 Red wind-swept rose doth blow ;
When death stands in the austere gateway saying,—
While round him strains of music weird are playing,—
 “Thou shalt no further go ;”

Oh, what shall then the former days be worth,
And all the gladness of the green old earth,
 And all her white may-trees ?
Will all be new and strange, in regions far
Beyond the fire-gleam of the faintest star
 That rides the heavenly seas ?

When in the city of solemn death we stand,
Lip touching pale lip, pale hand touching hand,
 What shall be waiting there ?—
Shall we meet poets true who went before,
Whom we saw landing on the fatal shore ?
 Shall we find lost loves fair ?

Shall we find all the flowers that fill the land
Of sweet death waiting for our outstretched hand,—
 Or find no flowers at all ?
O spirits who have passed us, where are ye ?
We left you on the margin of the sea,
 Where blue waves rise and fall :

We left you there upon the golden sand,
And turned one moment, just to gaze inland
 And smell the hayfields' bloom.
When we looked back from cliff-tops to the sea
The waves were there (but grey), and where were ye?
 Gone, through the deepening gloom!

And then against the last gold sunset-bar
We marked a white sail outlined, faint and far,
 Upon the horizon dim.
Slowly we turned,—and up the valley-glade
We walked alone, alone, through beeches' shade,
 With tightened lips and grim.

And we have never heard one word as yet,
Though we have watched so many a gold sun set
 Upon that ocean-marge :
O'er the wide channel comes the silvery laughter
Of winds and waters,—but no word flies after!
 The distances are large.

*

*

O men of our own century who have gone
Across the strait, and made the waters wan
 For sorrow that were blue,
What have ye found within death's fair green France?
What loves of subtle sweet undreamed-of glance?
 What passion-raptures new?

As ye crossed o'er the channel-waves of death
(Was it by night?) did all the sea's soft breath
 Mingle with your swift dreams?
Did the white moon upon the water shining
Thrill your life-weary souls, new life divining
 In her prophetic gleams?

What found ye in the land beyond the sea?
Is there in death-land any fair city
 That waits,—as Paris waits,—
To welcome travellers from our sunless shore,
And cherish life's pale myriads as they pour
 Within its glittering gates?

Will you who leave life's England journey on
Till Southern seas before your eyes have shone,
 And some grand Rome at last,
Some central city of death beneath the blue
That burns Italian-wise the white streets through,
 By no clouds overcast?

And will you find within this city fair,
Full of the fragrance of all Southern air,
 Delights superb indeed?
O English spirits who have lately crossed
Death's channel, by one spring's same grey waves tossed,
 Has each soul won its meed?

Darwin, Rossetti, Longfellow,—ye meet
Perhaps to-day in death's chief city sweet,
 The Rome we see not here:
And there Mazzini welcomes you who come
From the free land that gave his heart a home
 Through many an exiled year.

And Dante takes his English namesake's hand,
And leads him through the flowerful unseen land
 Where we one day shall be.
O keen strong thinker, and ye poets fair,
The land of death is filled with holier air
 To-day, and death's eyes see

A kinglier flame of triumph gleam along
His waters, now that your pure triple song
 (For is not Nature's lore
Searched out by loving eyes a poem indeed?)
To the great songs of history may succeed,
 To sound for evermore.

Death's Roman streets to-day three English hearts
Enter,—and forth the soul of Shelley starts,
 And Keats is ready there
To welcome these, and all the city is bright
With garlands green and red, and garlands white,
 And full of gracious air.

While we in black-robed Westminster to-day
Mourn the great thoughtful spirit passed away,
 High souls are glad afar :
And through the blue heavens bending o'er our isle
Not all cloud-folds to-night shall hide the smile
 Of a new deathless star.

And the broad fields wherethrough the great dead roam
Shall welcome two new-born dead poets home ;
 For they win those we mourn,
And the same wind that carries us to death
Is the exulting loud-tongued breeze that saith
 To them, "A bard is born."

Ap. 27, 1882.

II.

ANOTHER day ! another great soul dead ! *
With the white wreath of high thought round his head
 The pure-souled Western seer,
The prophet of vast eras yet to be,
Has passed into his immortality
 And left us lonelier here.

Couldst thou not wait when Longfellow was gone ?
Must still the tide of cold death circle on ?

 Oh, o'er the Atlantic's waves
Our sorrow reaches ! When our souls were young,
How through them thy fair voice of warning rung,
 Bidding us leave old graves ;

Bidding us dwell not even overlong
By that far Lake whose blue waves' tender song
 Sounded in Jesus' ear :
Bidding us look towards other skies than those
That folded round with their clear sunsets' rose
 That Teacher dread and dear.

Oh, thy true voice was of the modern time !
Thou didst dispel old mists. In prose and rhyme
 Like Parker lion-hearted,
Thou didst proclaim the glory of days to be ;
Thy soul was winged and confident and free ;
 Free-souled, thou hast departed.

* Ralph Waldo Emerson died on April 27th, 1882.

The day will come when those brave hearts and few
Who through this clamorous century tarried true
 To centuries yet unborn,
Will win their fitting meed. They pass away :
But their pure words and golden with us stay,
 And outlive wrath and scorn.

Thou art the fourth great soul this spring has seen
Pass ; yet her mantle is as fresh and green
 As ever. Not in black
The Spring shall robe herself, nor will the sea
Storm round our wind-blown shores less joyously :
 For Nature ne'er looks back.

In one more day the first sweet May-kissed hedge
Will blossom ; soon our rivers' thymy edge
 Will lure the yellow bee :
The dragon-fly will dart the reeds between,
Clothed in his wondrous mail of azure sheen ;
 The moon will kiss the sea.

And we too, thinking on the changeless way
Of Nature, temper sorrow as we may ;
 We give our dead to God :
Then follow as best we can along the path
That they through wintry storms and thunders' wrath
 With dauntless footsteps trod.

Ap. 29, 1882.

HYMN.

WHEN our bitter foes surround us,
 Father, be our stay !
When in chains our sins have bound us
And our follies have discrowned us,
 Shine thou on our way !

Starlike through the darkness gleaming,
 Father, lift and save !
Strengthen us through youth's wild dreaming,
And when age's wan moon beaming
 Slants upon our grave.

When fierce passions would betray us,
 Father, safeguard be !
Rose-crowned pleasures would delay us,
Cares and griefs of life would slay us,
 Were it not for thee.

Though rich flowers fill all life's garden,
 Thou art more than these.
Thou canst soothe and heal and pardon,
Soften the wild hearts that harden,
 Bend the stubborn knees.

When our closest friends have failed us,
 Thou canst hold us fast.
Friends who in life's morning hailed us
Now as foes have oft assailed us,
 But *thy* love doth last !

Lo ! the grave's cold hands are taking
Mother, wife, or child.
What can dull the soul's lone aching,
Save man's maddened heart from breaking
In its anguish wild ?

Nought can aid us then but knowing,
Father, that with thee
Our dead dear ones live in glowing
Tender new life, ever flowing
From thy Being's sea.

We, alive, would trust thee ever,
Father, sweet and sure ;
Knowing that no death can sever,—
Knowing that the grave parts never,—
In thy love secure.

HYMN.

THROUGH the foaming white-lipped surges,
Great All-Father, steer us on.
Pain behind us stings and scourges ;
In the sky the sun gleams wan.

All our lives are blent with sorrow ;
Not one heart doth understand.
When we sleep, we dread the morrow ;
Stretch thou forth thy strong right hand !

Songs and flowers and sunsets fail us
And the sweet God hidden in these.
When pain's barbed red points assail us,
Worthless is the singing breeze.

Helpless is a rose to aid us
When our feet grief's wild ways tread ;
When despair's fierce spears invade us,
And the hopes of youth fall dead.

Lift thou then, thou great All-Father,
Thy majestic helping hand !
All our weary spirits gather
Towards thine own eternal land.

Not one flower's exceeding splendour
Helps a torn soul on its way :
Thou, than all flowers far more tender,
Change the darkness into day !

O'er cold mount, through moonless hollow,
O'er lone seas, our footsteps tend.
God, thy banner we would follow !
Yet *is* death the awful end ?

Past the peaks where stars wax breathless,
Past all heights man dimly knows,
Lift us : blend with ours thy deathless
Fathomless divine repose.

TO A YOUNG AMERICAN LADY.

WE met upon the pier, and parted,
That August evening fair :
I pass the same spot, weary-hearted ;
You are not there !

The continent will soon receive you ;
Paris will hold you fast,
And lure your love, and never leave you
One vision of the past.

And Switzerland with snowy mountains
Will rise upon your sight,
And by the Rhone's green swift-foot fountains
You will forget that night.

We might have done so much together,
If Fate had kinder been !
Paced summer woods in still blue weather,
My grey-eyed stranger-queen !

I English and an English singer,
You from America,
If time had had the heart to linger,
Had had so much to say !

But lo ! the chance was missed. I never
Asked even of your name.
And now the eternal time-waves sever,
And you I may not claim.

But take this song, and let my yearning
Across far skies and seas
Fly winged, and reach you slowly turning
Through moonlit orange-trees.

And let me say how through the flying
Swift years that are to be
I still shall bear in mind that dying
Gold sun across the sea.

That sun we saw, and star that lightened
Above the calm blue deep :—
New dawns have flamed, new sunsets brightened,—
But still you haunt my sleep.

You come in dreams, and will come ever
While wind and sun and sea
Are still the same. I know that never
Your image quite will flee.

Just twenty minutes' talk,—then parted !
So life and love are spent :
But I am always heavy-hearted ;
And are you quite content ?

Aug. 9, 1882.

THE BRIDEGROOM OF VENUS.

Not with the autumnal leaves so red and golden
Nor with the autumnal light
Crowned art thou, Venus, when strong suns embolden
Thy coming yet more bright.

Thou art not spring-like, nor of mortal seeming,
Nor must thy bridegroom wear
The buds of April, tender, soft and gleaming,
Within gold spring-blown hair.

Thou art as summer. When thy June around thee
Burns splendid through the blue,
We know that then the fervent year has found thee
Robed in thy raiment new.

And then thy bridegroom, weary of the daughters
Of earth though sweet they be,
Yearneth for thy gold locks beside the waters
Of thine own amorous sea.

And he must mix his soul with summer glory,—
Not craving for cool shades,
Or autumn hues, brown, radiant, gold and gory,
Or spring-like colonnades.

Thy mouth is summer : and thy bridegroom knowing
The flower so strange and fair
Must kiss the amorous gorgeous petals glowing
Against the torrid air.

Not ever again can common loves content him :
 This is his sad great doom !
Now that thine arrow of golden love hath rent him,
 Point-poisoned from thy bloom.

But evermore, until his spirit find thee,
 He wanders and must seek,
Weary and mad till love again may bind thee :
 Weary and pale and weak.

Thou liftest up for him thy soft long lashes
 And gazest in his eyes,
And o'er him the wild sense of summer dashes
 And light of summer skies.

Thou holdest him in arms that know no limit
 To pleasure of embrace :—
With mouth that hath nor age nor death to dim it
 And deathless queenlike face

Thou liftest him to regions past man's dreaming
 And makest him sublime ;
Inspiring all the swift thoughts that whirl streaming
 Along the tides of rhyme.

Equal with thee in majesty of yearning
 Must he, thy bridegroom, be ;
Loves lesser than thine awful one love spurning
 Like the contemptuous sea.

This is the doom of him who, loving summer,
 Knew not the summer's charm,
But thought to hold her like a frail new-comer
 By force of mortal arm.

Not knowing that the sweet June's very favour
Is death to him who breathes
The intoxicating sweet month's flower-fed savour,
Or dallies with its wreaths.

For Venus in the sweet air spreads her pinions
Whose plumage sways and flows,
And flowers she hath for ministers and minions,
A slave in every rose.

So that her breath, enchanting and entrancing,
Saddens and hurts and slays ;
Man cannot bear her shield of sunlight glancing
Across the bright-helmed days.

Autumn we bear ; but not the summer's brightness,
And not the summer's bloom.
Sorrow we bear ; but not love's perfect whiteness
And tender close perfume.

So, truly, when the queen of all love's splendour,
Venus, takes in her arms,
More than all earthly tenderest women tender,
A mortal spirit and charms

And chains him, he must reach through strength of passion
And kingly force of will,
Loving in limitless immortal fashion,
Heaven's heights,—or love must kill.

But, whether slain or unslain, let love find us
And with her sunlike hair
Enchant and ravish and pervade and bind us,—
For love alone is fair.

QUESTIONINGS.

I.

IF God be dead, and life be void
Of hope that lifted us and buoyed,—
If heaven no more in front may shine,—

CHORUS of the sons }
and daughters of } *Yet have we love's own wreaths to twine !*
men.— }

If all be passed and over soon,
And soulless gleam the stars and moon,
And heartless the triumphant sun,—

CHORUS. *Yet have we toil, till toil is done !*

If ne'er the dreams that once so bright
Laughed golden-winged in April light
A heavenly fair reward shall find,—

CHORUS. *Yet have we rose-breath on the wind !*

If every joy be smitten hard,
And pleasure's rigid gates be barred,—
If all the old gods with God be gone,—

CHORUS. *Yet Love's firm footstep labours on !*

II.

But there came answer through the night,
Loud thundering from the mountain-height
And whispering softly o'er the sea :

"I am, and thou art part of me."

The great seas caught the sound, and mirth
Rang through the sunlit vales of earth :
O'er heathery hill and gold-flowered lea

God's voice came—" *These are part of
me.*"

And lovers' souls no more were dead,
Nor faded the sweet rose's head :
They all were gladdened with strange glee ;
God said to each, "*Thou art part of me.*"

The lonely spirit, whose pathway dim
Seems full of foes who encompass him,
Has caught the sound and feels that he
Is saved, since God said, "*Trust in me.*"

The sinner feels God's tender glow
Of pity about his dead heart flow :
It flowers, as flowers a barren tree,
For God said, "*Son, believe in me.*"

O live strong God, make me a part
Of thine unmeasured mountain-heart ;
Pure like the sky, strong like the sea,
A spirit of boundless love like thee !

“AND YET!”

ALL seemed forlorn. Bright hope had died away,
The waves were grey,
And sullen waters on the shore-banks beat;
The heaven I once desired had vanished quite,
And all its light—
And yet the world was sweet!

Never for me the angelic white robes now,
Nor crown for brow,
Nor God's hand for my helpless hand to meet;
Yet on our fair earth through eternity
Woman will be,
And woman's touch is sweet!

No hope for weary man beyond the tomb;
Nought now but gloom;
Not even hell's wild light of fiery sleet,
Yet round the world for all eternity
Will flow the sea,
The sea's breath will be sweet!

Lips meet in love.—Alas! love ends so soon.
How short is June!
One day the lilac scents the London street:
One moment from Time's grudging hands we win:
Delight is sin—
Yet some sins are so sweet!

Hold thou thy loved one through the summer night ;
 Soon 'twill be light ;
The armies of the stars will own defeat :
The sun will frighten love from out the skies,
 With flaming eyes :
But yet the night was sweet !

The velvet lips that rested once on thine,
 With touch divine,
Turn elsewhere. Will love pause, though tears entreat ?
Through all time, never !—Yet in days gone by
 (Yes, one swift sigh !)
Those lips to thee were sweet.

One hour of rapture, and the sun's warm breath ;
 Then sunless death ;
Death for the poppies and the golden wheat :
Death for the larkspur gathering pearls of dew,
 And pansies blue :
Yet pansies find life sweet !

Places where love in the old bright days was fair,
 And joys that were,
Have one same sombre message to repeat ;
The grass will shortly wave above our tomb
 With green wild bloom—
And yet the grass is sweet !

The honeysuckle in the hedge last year
 Loved to be near
Those lovers whispering on the garden-seat.
Divided are those loving hearts to-day !
 Sundered for aye !
Yet was not last year sweet ?

The fierce-eyed sun has risen, and we look back
 Upon love's track :
Were ever starlit tender moods discreet ?
Could ever flower of fragrant passion bear
 The morn's keen air ?
(Yet passion-flowers are sweet !)

The summer mocks us with its wealth of blue,
 And wondrous hue,
And fervent fierce unsympathetic heat ;
The blossoms mock us with their wealth of sheen,
 Gay 'midst the green—
Yet starlit nights are sweet !

Love and all tender joys will soon be o'er,
 And we no more
Shall thrill at the approach of woman's feet ;
Quiet we soon in the chill earth shall lie,
 My love and I—
And yet my love is sweet !

“HALF-SEEN !”

O GIRL who turnest down the street,
Over-slow yet over-fleet,

Half-seen,
Thy face was fair and soft and sweet
I ween !

Never through all eternity
Shall I thy full true beauty see :
Thou art lost
For ever now alas ! to me,
Crowd-tost.

It is so strange and sad to think
That just one sudden broken link
Snaps all.
Our dreams are light-beams. Through a chink
They crawl :

Then something passes and the light
Is quenched, and all again is night.
So now
Thou art gone, O clear of gaze and white
Of brow !

Thou art gone.—Yet, wholly felt, half seen,
A haunting grace was in thy mien
And air ;
And soft as Helen's might have been
Thy hair.

Even the colour of thine eyes
I ne'er shall know, more than of skies
That beam
Next year. In vain e'en fancy tries
To dream !

For fancy dreams of many things—
Of bird that flies, and bird that sings
 I' the snare ;
But finds the bird with swiftest wings
 Most fair.

We love the thing we cannot gain ;
And most of all what brings us pain
 We prize.
I love, because I love in vain,
 Thine eyes.

In unseen bower, on unknown day,
Thine eyes will dream (be it brown or grey,
 Thy glance !)—
And what Love wins, he'll cast away
 Perchance.

And I, who could have loved thee well,
Shall never know what thing befell,—
 Nor see
Thy moment's heaven, thy life-long hell
 To be.

Only the stars that watch thy sleep
Will know if thou dost moan or weep,
 Or where
Thou singest, or dost sink in deep
 Despair.

What thou art, I shall never know.—
One moment's pang. Then let it go,
 The pain !
This dream-born flower can never blow
 Again.

SUMMER'S DREAM.

THE summer flees away, and who shall find or follow ,
Her footstep, or discern the green-browed hollow
Wherein fair summer seeks to rest,
With flowers upon her breast ?

The summer flies.—Perchance her restless heart grows weary ;
Perchance she finds earth's love-tales waxing dreary ;
Perchance she tires of praise, and longs
To escape men's lutes and songs.

In forests weird and strange, she would be followed after
By Jove's deep voice or swift Apollo's laughter ;
And would be gathered, like a rose,
Into sublime repose.

She would be seized from heaven, and in the flashing splendour
Of the god's white arms wrapt, in sacred tender
Ineffable supreme embrace,
And know Love face to face.

In the dim forest-deep, among soft blossoms sleeping,
She dreams the golden-bowed keen god comes leaping
Along the pink-flowered woodland ways,
Upon his brows the bays. —

She dreams the white-browed god, her fiery-hearted lover,
Comes, swiftly pressing through the tangled cover,
And that his burning kiss falls light
Upon her bosom white.

But when she wakes, behold ! the frost has touched the larches :
She gazes now no more through leafy arches.

The wind has changed. 'Tis keen and chill.

Grey is the emerald hill.

Apollo's harp is hushed. Lo ! summer was but dreaming :
Cold in the sky the unroyal sun is gleaming.

Closed now are August's golden gates :

Hard by November waits.

*

*

Ah ! woman too can dream. She dreams of Love for ever.
Does Love fulfil one sweet old promise ? Never !

Love stoops from heaven one single day—

Then wings, and he's away !

The maiden dreams of Love. As Summer sought Apollo,
The maiden would find deep-eyed Love and follow :

Till the eyes of very Time grow dim,

The girl would follow him.

But will he wait for her ? Will Love delay his flying ?
Never ! not for ten thousand wild hearts sighing.

Love kisses once, and then he goes

To seek an unkissed rose.

So vanish all the dreams ! So woman's heart is broken !
She moans, " Would soft-voiced Love had never spoken !

Would Love had never seemed so fair—

For Love's name is Despair."

TWO SONNETS.

I.

REPRESENTATIVE SOUNDS.

A YOUNG girl's perfect ringing silvery laugh ;
The strange slow sullen plunge of waves that break ;
The ripple of leafage which the June winds shake ;
The lisp of rivers which the breezes quaff ;
The flapping of the flag around its staff ;
The subtle hissing of the sinuous snake ;
The sighing of reeds upon the mountain-lake ;
The salmon's fierce splash, bleeding from the gaff ;—
The cheer of legions thundering through the breach ;
The songs of children, and their thoughtless glee ;
A woman's heartfelt moan of dull despair ;
The strong man's deep groan when the surgeons reach
The rankling bullet ; crash of falling tree ;
The light soft sound of heavy back-flung hair.

II.

REPRESENTATIVE COLOURS.

THE sunlight glinting on a space of bright
Green grass within a wood ; the blue-green leaves
Of the sea-poppy ; the rich amber sheaves ;
The sea—grey-blue, or brown, or angry white,
Or Southern blue against broad Southern light ;
A woman's hair—blue-black, or golden-brown ;
The sudden flash of jewels in a crown ;
The depth of purple-black vast starless night ;—
The subtle blending in a woman's eyes
Of green and brown ; a soldier's scarlet coat ;
A woman's white form,—nobly, fully, bare,
Save for the shadow of chin upon the throat
Shadeless ; the red sun seen through fog-bound skies ;
The carmine seaweed that green waves' lips tear.

“TOO SOON!”

ONE moment ! Then you passed away,
And all the sapphire sky turned grey
In June.
Why wait not, when 'tis close of day
So soon ?

I caught a glimpse of laughing eyes,
Bright-coloured like the laughing skies
Of June.
They passed. Why is it summer dies
So soon ?

Farewell, clear eyes that flashed and gleamed,
Then left me lonely, having dreamed
Too soon.
When you had passed, no more it seemed
Like June !

Farewell, swift feet that down the street
Passed just too soon for eyes to meet—
Too soon
To make a sweet night yet more sweet
In June.

LOVE-SONNETS.

SONNET I.

A SUDDEN PANG.

It smote across me with a sudden pang,
The thought that *you* must die. It shall not be!
If there is soul of passion in the sea,
Or in the moon whose white orb used to hang
Above the wild plains where thy spirit sang
Its girlish love-song to infinity,—
If there was love in sun or flower or tree
Or river whose soft voice beside thee rang,—
If there is love in the Unknown Power or me,—
Thou shalt live onward through the viewless years.
Oh when death calls thee, and thine eyes' bright light
Fails, send for me. If I can see for tears
I'll use my sword once more, and death shall flee,
For love that dies not can put death to flight.

SONNET II.

REST.

O SPIRIT, O love, canst thou bestow on me—
 Me who have wandered through the sable night
 For lonely ages,—who have watched the flight
 Of clouds from God's hand through eternity,—
 Who saw the stars when they began to be,—
 Who marked the first sun launch its golden light
 Upon the stormy blue,—whose weary sight
 Followed the breakers on the first grey sea :—
 Canst thou, O love, O spirit, on me bestow
 The one thing I am most in need of—Rest ?
 I'd give my very soul to end the quest
 Eternal, agonizing, dark with woe.
 Sorrow has been my bosom's inmost guest
 Since Eden laughed in its first sunset's glow.

SONNET III.

LOVE'S YEARNING.

IF I die first, I would unbar the tomb
 And fill its gateways full of flowers for thee
 If such a gift in mortal love might be :
 I'd make for thee the iron meadows bloom,
 And scatter with my wingèd songs the gloom
 That now pervades and chills eternity.
 I'd touch to blue the sable-crested sea
 Whose waves through night's dark arches peer and loom,
 But if no longing may give love the power
 To ope death's gateways for another soul
 I would leave with thee these few songs in flower
 That, when my feet have passed the songless goal,
 Death who would rush with harsh tread through thy bower
 Destroying part, may not destroy the whole.



SONNET IV.

"JUST ONE STAR."

I WOULD give of my being unto thee,
 As God gave of himself with love supreme
 And filled the bright world with his every dream
 And made his thought incarnate in the sea
 And in the blossom of the red may-tree
 And in the tropic mystic white moon-gleam
 And in the lily floating on the stream
 And in the passions of humanity.

So I would in my humbler measure bring :
 Not having all the suns and stars to take
 Wherewith thy spirit's fiery thirst to slake
 As slakes creation's thirst creation's King—
 But having just the power to love and sing
 And just one star to bring thee for love's sake.

SONNET V.

GOD.

THOU needest God.—Yes, he can conquer death
 For thee, and open the eternal gates.
 For more than man's love thy sweet spirit waits
 And for far more than the one small rose-wreath
 That love can give thee. When love's mortal breath
 Flags, thou dost need the breath that renovates
 The laughing flowers when darkness' strength abates
 And the sun flashes from the black night's sheath.
 Yes, woman needeth God. I know it well.
 Because I know that I have not the whole
 Undying force to satisfy thy soul
 I love thee more than I can ever tell.—
 Woman needs man. Man needeth her. And each
 Needs God's heart,—smiling ever out of reach.

SONNET VI.

GOD IN MAN.

AND yet we seek the human.—When we tire
 Of God's great loving limitless embrace
 And of the features of the endless face,—
 Yea, when we weary of his passion-fire
 And of his stern implacable desire,
 We turn with longing to some grassy place
 On earth, and 'mid the lilies for a space
 We rest, and listen to the earth's old lyre.

The human love is very very sweet,
 And there are seasons when the highest rhyme
 Of kingliest stars would strike as less sublime
 Than love-songs sung where the brown waters meet
 On earth, or where rose-tendrils cling and climb.—
 When God fails, listen for Love's human feet.

THEE FIRST, THEE LAST.

BECAUSE thou wast the first
To waken passion's thirst,
When all the morning youthful air was sweet ;
Because, while skies were blue
And fern-fronds fresh with dew,
Thine eyes were morning's eyes for me to meet,
Thy name first, last, in song-land I repeat.

Because the seas were fair
With breath of morning air, —
Because enchanted sunlight filled the bays ;
Because in vale and dell
Young spring-like petals fell
And dreams were sweet in many a woodland maze,
Thee first, thee last, in song to heaven I raise.

Because the woods were green,
Because thou wast my queen
Long ere pale Sorrow haunted with sad eyes
The autumn desolate rills,
And thunder-smitten hills,
And wild moors which the purple heather dyes,
Song's light outlives the sunshine of the skies.

Because thou wast my Bride,
Young, beautiful, soft-eyed,
Long ere the voice of other woman spoke ;
Because thou wast the flower
First sent in life's first hour,
White as the seas that round our footsteps broke,
Both first and last I bow me to thy yoke.

Because no woman's face
Had, then, the same sweet grace,
Nor had the eyes of woman magic then
To lead astray my heart ;
Because the crown of Art
Thou wast, and my life's mission among men
Thou madest plain, I hymn thee, love, again.

I hymn, sweet lady, thee,
With voice of our old sea,
With passionate surge of song-wave on the shore
Of fast-receding time ;
I seek thee in my rhyme,
Beautiful, tender as thou wast, once more.
I loved thee in silence. Now my songs adore.

Because in the early glow
Of morning thou didst throw
A glamour o'er my life that never yet
Hath faded quite away,
Though shades of evening grey
Are in the West, and cold years must be met,
Upon thy brow this wreath of song I set.

I bring thee, love, again
A soft memorial strain ;
A memory as of morning o'er the sea :
Pale flowers for thee to wind,
With love-glance flung behind,
Within thy tresses ere swift years that flee
Banish the morning thoughts, and thoughts of me.

THE SONG OF YOUTH.

Thee first, thee last, I crown
And lay my singing down
Just as of old for blessing of thine hand ;
Again, in dreams, a boy,
Full of love's fiery joy,
Watching the sea-shades of thine eyes I stand,
While miles of meadow-sweet scent all the land.

THE LAST FAREWELL.

A LONG farewell, a strange farewell, I send thee,
The last farewell of all—
Not death's farewell, but life's.—All joys attend thee
Till life's last red leaf fall !

All gifts be thine, all flowers bloom round about thee,
All bright suns shine for thee !
Summer adores, Spring cannot smile without thee ;
All things thou swayest but me.

Mine heart thou swayest no more. A brave heart finds me,
A stronger soul than thine.
New chains of love are woven. A new love binds me,
And makes its sweetness mine.

For years and years thy wondrous beauty held me,
A captive at thy feet :
To song and toil thy grey clear eyes impelled me,
And love of thee was sweet.

Thou hadst not heart to meet supreme devotion
With love as pure and strong !
Love's waves fell back in their own soundless ocean ;
No soft voice answered song.

I sought for perfect truth,—for love I pleaded,
Faith mocking years that flee :
My eager prayers rose answerless, unheeded ;
Hear now love's word to thee :—

“ Farewell ! farewell ! My strangest saddest greeting,
My last, to thee I send :
Just the last sound of singing waves retreating,
Our sea’s wild poem’s end.

“ The wind’s last whisper ’mid our ferns and heather
And many a mountain-pine ;
The last blue gleam of old sweet August weather,
The last song’s sad last line.

“ My youth’s last voice.—My manhood turns not hither,
It turns away from thee :
It turns with tenderest love and yearning whither
Thou canst not follow me.

“ It turns towards other eyes—eyes truer and sweeter,
Eyes yet more bright than thine ;
Towards love whose soul is sure, whose feet are fleetier
To watch and follow mine.

“ So this last time I turn towards the old palace
Of youth and love and song ;
Turn once to thee whom all my youth loved, Alice
(And love’s last look is long !)

“ Farewell ! farewell !—Yet forceless for estranging
Is the lute-voice of Art :
Love’s last farewell, eternal and unchanging,
Rings from the altered heart.”

BOOK II.

THE SONG OF MANHOOD.

I.

MISCELLANEOUS POEMS.

SONNETS.

SONNET I.

THE OLD EARTH'S SWEETNESS.

YET sweeter and yet sweeter as we pass
Towards bitter death that slays all songs and flowers,
Becomes the scent that hovers o'er the bowers
Of youth ; yet lovelier the bright green grass ;
Yet tenderer fair passion's burning hours ;
Yet softer all the varied songs of love ;
Yet bluer the clear spotless heavens above ;
And yet more manifold life's glorious powers.

Now for the first time human life is fair
In that there is no life beyond the grave :
Now for the first time shines the morning air
With true delight,—now first the branches wave
In genuine glee,—now first the roses wear
In perfect calm those tints no power can save.

SONNET II.

THE POET'S DOOM.

THIS is the poet's doom : to love all joys,—
 To mark them fading, and to mourn them dead.
 To see the rose at daybreak blushing red :
 At night to watch the wind with wanton noise
 Scattering the petals from their perfect poise,—
 Strewing with pale pink gems the brown cold bed ;
 To marvel at some woman's curve of head,
 Till Death both body and carven brow destroys.
 This is the poet's doom—far more than others
 To feel the life, and so the death far more :
 To sing for the sweet sake of tuneless brothers
 The beauty of each shell upon the shore :
 To see too deep ; to love a rose too much,—
 And so to mark it fading at his touch !

SONNET III.

LOVE'S DESPAIR.

OH infinite delight, when never more
 The white seas shine before us on the sand,—
 When at the touching of Death's calm sweet hand
 Colour forsakes the hills, and light the shore !
 Yes : then shall all life's wild fierce pain be o'er.
 Nought shall arouse us from our perfect sleep :
 Not woman's touch,—nor woman's glances deep,—
 Nor ripples of the stream, nor ocean's roar.
 Whom woman cannot rouse is more than dead.
 Death's infinite peace shall fall upon each soon :
 Then in the timeless land where star nor moon
 Glitters,—nor rose of white nor rose of red,—
 And where no woman's figure thrills the air,
 We shall find rest from love,—and love's despair.

SONNET IV.

SONG'S IMMORTALITY.

SHELLEY is dead, and Keats is dead,—and who
 Will take to-day the poet's harp and sing?
 Whose voice shall make the mountain-summits ring
 Or sound at night beneath the moonlit blue?—
 Great souls are dead. Must English song die too,
 Die out and perish,—while our sea-waves bring
 Still their same ceaseless chant, and ceaseless spring
 Robes the sweet English flower-filled vales anew?
 Ah! while one English rose blooms red at morn
 Still shall fresh English deathless song be born,
 Pure and untrammelled as the English skies:
 And while one English woman still is fair,
 Music shall sound upon the English air:—
 Song is not dead, till the last woman dies.

SONNET V.

ENGLAND.

ENGLAND of Shakespeare, Shelley, Milton, Keats,
 Burns, Byron, Wordsworth,—hath thine head grown grey,
 And are the former glories passed away?
 Is the heart tired that 'neath thine armour beats?
 As year by year with speedy wing retreats,
 Doth thy strength dwindle slowly and decay?
 While yet the world basks in the golden day
 Is it mist of night that round about thee fleets?—
 Rise thou, O England! Let thy great limbs sleep
 No longer. Burn upon us with those eyes
 That blenched not at Trafalgar's blood-red skies,—
 Nor Waterloo,—nor Alma's thundering steep:—
 Let not this crowd of mockers round thee leap,
 While passionless thy giant sword-arm lies.

SONNET VI.

WATERLOO.

A STORMY evening on a far-stretched plain
 Of meadow-land and corn-land,—and a host
 Of stubborn red-coats holding every post
 Against the interminable cannon-rain.
 Oh, to live through that deathless day again !
 The day when the Old Guard he trusted most,
 Napoleon,—found their world-wide fierce-lipped boast,
 Valid a thousand times, this one time vain.
 The blue long lines in motion, and the red
 Long line as steady as a wall of stone !—
 The Old Guard, plunging through that long day's dead,
 Swept like the mad sea-surges shoreward blown
 Against the red calm ranks ;—then with a groan
 Wavered,—and turned,—and the whole world's conquerors fled !

SONNET VII.

CHRIST AND ENGLAND.

NAY ! but our own dear land thou shalt not hold,
 Lord Christ. Thou hast thy white-walled Eastern town,
 And thine own endless worshipful renown,
 And heaven's own sunlit heights, and towers of gold.—
 Not thine the English wild furze-yellowed wold ;
 Not thine the breeze that sweeps green hill and down ;
 Not thine our women,—thee they shall not crown ;
 Not round thee shall their arms with passion fold.
 Rest where thou art, lest thou shouldst have a fall.—
 The storm is in our spirits, and the sea ;
 The skies' grim armies hearken at our call,
 And the grey mountain-vapours round us flee,
 And murmurous ocean girds us like a wall.
 We are content. We have no need of thee.

SONNET VIII.

FAIRY LAND.

I FELL asleep and dreamed of Fairy Land.—
 Of cruel monsters with red savage eyes,
 And yellow snowdrops, and strange twilight skies :
 A blue-haired fairy took me by the hand
 And led me towards a Palace where a band
 Of fays, with locks like the pink fronds that rise
 Within the sea-waves, danced in gleesome wise :—
 Then came the Fairy Queen with golden wand.
 She moved to meet me. When my eyes met hers,
 I felt along my veins a sudden thrill,
 As when the passionate young blood leaps and stirs :—
 I woke : I lay upon a low sand-hill
 'Mid gold sea-poppies and the gaunt grey furze—
 But that Queen's hazel glances haunt me still.

SONNET IX.

BALACLAVA.

ALONG the valley the wild riders speed.—
 This is the complement of Waterloo :
 That showed what English infantry could do :
 To-day the horsemen win fame's deathless meed.
 Horsemen and infantry are one indeed ;
 The horsemen are the English fiery soul
 Loosened at length from years of still control,—
 The others are the calm that did precede.
 When English horse and English foot combine,
 Who shall withstand that red tremendous line
 Holding both passions of the English race,—
 The calm still passion of its pent-up strength,
 And fury as of the Light Brigade at length
 Free for that fiery blood-splashed charge and chase !

SONNET X.

THE FINAL LONELINESS.

IF God be dead, and man be left alone,
 And no immortal golden towers be fair,
 And nothing sweeter than earth's summer air
 Can ever by our yearning hearts be known ;
 If every altar now be overthrown,
 And the last mistiest hill-tops searched and bare
 Of Deity,—if man's most urgent prayer
 Is just a seed-tuft tossed about and blown :—
 If this be so, yet let the lonely deep
 Of awful blue interminable sky
 Thrill to man's kingly unbefriended cry :
 Let man the secret of his own heart keep
 Sacred as ever ;—let his lone soul be
 Strong like the lone winds and the lonelier sea.

SONNET XI.

NAPOLEON AT ST. HELENA.

No more the plains of Europe blushing red
 Beneath his foot, nor Paris full of flame
 Of triumph—ringing with the conqueror's name—
 And the Cæsarian laurel round his head.
 No more for him his countless armies led
 The countless armies of the world to tame,
 And necks of kings to bend to lowliest shame ;
 No more wide moonlit acres of his dead.
 No more the black plumes of his Cuirassiers,—
 The Old Guard's white facings, and the breathless glee
 Of mingled battle, and the glittering tiers
 Of bayonets, and sword-sheen. Alone for thee,
 World-conqueror, shine this island's rocky spears,
 And that grey weaponless unconquered sea.

SONNET XII.

THE RETREAT FROM MOSCOW.

AT last against the conquerors of the world
Nature took arms and fought. The circling storm
Was deadlier than the *mêlée* fierce and warm,
And snow-shafts than fire-bolts against them hurled.
Some sank beneath the drift and some slept curled
In hollows, till the white cloud hid each form ;
Some staggered wildly onward arm in arm,
With the tricoloured standards dank and furled.
Napoleon gazed around,—and where were they,
The helmets and great epaulettes of red,
Whose sheen and flame through many a bloody day
Had been his rapture ? At his feet one dead
Drummer lay stark. Then nought above, below,
Save black heaven,—and the interminable snow.

SONNET XIII.

PANTHEISTIC DREAMS.

WHAT is the worth of Pantheistic dreams ?—
Oh, what avails it at the hour of death
To mix our souls with countless roses' breath,
Or with the shining June-sky's sunset-gleams,
Or with the glory of blue-rippling streams ?
What joy is there in groping underneath
The soil, to spring in roots of purple heath ?
What human rapture in the moon's white beams ?
One hour of human life, though it be wild
And mad and sinful, is a nobler spell
Than long eternities in green deep dell,
Mixed with the spirits of the snow-drops mild.
Hold to the human form : be not beguiled :
Man's heaven is not within the tulip's bell.

SONNET XIV.

TO THE "UNKNOWABLE" GOD.

O GOD within the awful voiceless void,—
God of the terrible and viewless night,
God also of the burning midday light,—
God, by whose hand the countless stars are buoyed,
And all the golden sunrise-clouds deployed,
And all the ridges of the sea made bright,
And the far snow-fields limitlessly white,—
God whom the green woods worship, overjoyed :
We cannot reach thee. Yet can prayer make head
Against the glittering tide of stars and suns,
And reach thy gracious central throne at once ?
Can our lone cry surmount the hill-tops red
With fiery sunset ? Can we find thee, Lord,—
Or are our groans towards earless heights outpoured ?

SONNET XV.

ONE CHANCE.

ONE life ; one chance ; one woman to adore ;
One rose to worship :—once, and never again,
Love to our bosom with sweet tears to strain ;
Once to kiss soft lips on some moonlit shore :
Once all our soul in music to outpour,
And once to enter Passion's golden fane,
And once to launch upon the foamy main
Of wild Romance where poets sank of yore :—
Just once, and then the end ;—one chance we have,
One life for singing,—then our lips are sealed,
And over us the green grass of the field
And the green fern-fronds and white roses wave :
One life for music,—then the silent grave,
And lands where never morning bugle pealed.

SONNET XVI.

MARY MAGDALENE.

OF all high crowns and sweet the green earth gave,
Or the still height of Galilean air,
Or white Jerusalem that shone so fair,
Or blue Gennesaret with rippling wave,
Not one had grace to charm or power to save
As hers who flooded with repentant hair
Christ's feet, and brought the ointment soft and rare
Of her own broken heart,—as “for his grave.”
So she first saw him when his spirit rose :—
And through all time, through scene on changing scene,
Who is there, knowing Christ, but also knows
The soiled heart made by soul-deep sorrow clean?
Ay! half his deathless halo Jesus owes
To the harlot : gold-haired Mary Magdalene.

SONNET XVII.

ON READING “*LES CONTEMPLATIONS*”
OF VICTOR HUGO.

FIRST through the early ways of love made bright
With tenderest blossoms, holding his strong hand
I wandered. Airs of morning soft and bland
Played round us ; through the greenwood's dense delight
Of tangled flowers and shrubs shone Venus white :—
The silver-fringed small wavelets kissed the land ;
We mixed with many a laughing lover-band ;
The world was fair to touch, and fair to sight.
Then came a change. By many a river-steep
We passed : the blossoms less abundant grew.
Still the same gold stars watched above our sleep,
And the same high interminable blue.
At last before the poet who led and me
Following, a grey waste gleamed :—Death and the sea.

SONNET XVIII.

LOUIS BONAPARTE.

O ONE great stain upon the English race,
 That when the Third Napoleon's warriors slew
 Women and children (though at Waterloo
 His uncle's men looked strong men in the face!)—
 When Paris reeked with blood, and when the base
 Came to the front, and exiled were the few
 Heroic souls to love and freedom true—
 That then this man at our blind hearts found grace!—
 That, when the soul through whom the century sings
 Found nought of help or refuge but the sea,
 And must for nineteen years an exile be,
 Guarded by lone stars and the tempest's wings,
 Our England's statesmen could so low descend
 As to call Louis Bonaparte a friend!

SONNET XIX.

THE TWENTIETH CENTURY.

WHEN quiet meadows shine beneath the sun
 Of the grand twentieth century : when the race
 Lifts up towards cloudless heaven a tearless face :
 When the far hills we cannot climb are won,
 Strange prospects seen, and deeds undreamed of done :
 Look back,—look back,—ye dwellers in the land,
 To us who at the century's strong gates stand
 But pass them not—fast falling one by one!—
 We sang the future, though the past loomed dread
 Behind us : sang the morning, though the night
 Had not yet opened full-fledged wings for flight ;
 Born in the mid strife of a century red,
 We sang the advent of a century white :—
 We sang the living,—knee-deep in the dead.

SONNET XX.

THE CITY OF THE DEAD.

IN early youth how far that City seems !—
 When our friends die, they seem to pass away
 Into some land where all the airs are grey,—
 Some viewless region too remote for dreams,
 Where the bold sun of daylight never gleams :—
 Our own steps loiter onward day by day ;
 O'er many a dark-blue lake and sunny bay
 We sail ; we kiss white hands on moonlit streams.
 We gather flowers : the City of the dead
 Is still remote. “ Which is the fairest thing,”
 We say—“ a red mouth, or this rose of red ? ”
 Along the May-bright lanes we laugh and sing.
 We turn a sudden corner : Lo ! the dread
 City before us,—in the sun-setting.

SONNET XXI.

RELIGION AND ART.

“ Religion and Art are best kept apart, I think.”

AH !—just so. Keep your God, and give me mine.
 Keep you your Sunday God, black-coated, grim,—
 Sever all Art and sweet delight from him,—
 Sip in his name your sacramental wine.
 My God is in these carven limbs that shine
 Upon the smooth blue sea's soft buoyant rim ;
 My God is in these full rich lips that brim
 With kisses sweeter than rain-washed woodbine.
 Beauty is my God :—I am well content.
 All wonder of form ye see not ; ye are blind.
 Pursue your road in peace,—ye were not meant
 The tabernacle of my God to find.
 Pursue your road with craven looks down-bent,
 And preach your hideous gospel to mankind !

SONNET XXII.

THE WORLD'S MODEL.

Not till thine eyes shine, are the sea-waves blue :

Not till the beauty of thy breast was born,

Did white foam put white lily-cups to scorn :

No stars were golden, till thy hair's bright hue

Flashed on the planet's morning. Over and through

The woodlands sighed no tender summer breeze

Till thy voice gave its key-note melodies

To every leaf, to every wind that blew.

Never an ash-tree bent with supple charm

Till thou didst teach the boughs and stem their skill

By curve of gracious body or throat or arm :—

Till thou didst sing, the bird-choirs all were mute :

Thy laughter gave its music to the rill ;

And thy lips reddened the yet pallid fruit.

SONNET XXIII.

THE FIRST KISS.

Lo ! the first kiss of Eve when the first night

Fell over Paradise,—the blue profound

Far heaven of darkness slowly closing round,

And silent star-ships steering into sight.

Lo ! the first kiss of red lips and of white

Breast, whose soft touch gave pleasure beyond bound :—

First they had feared the unheard-of dark,—but found

The passionate darkness sweeter than the light.

Yes : the first kiss. And since that far-off hour

Lips tender and innumerable have met ;

And lips shall meet sweeter than any yet ;

But in that star-watched and God-hallowed bower

Man's hand first gathered love, the dark night's flower,

And when the sun rose, dropped it with regret.

SONNET XXIV.

THE LAST KISS.

YES: the last kiss. For there shall come a last.—
When the whole race has dwindled, and the air
No longer serves us,—dense or over-rare ;
When human history hath an endless past,
But not one future day : when tired winds cast
About for flowers, but find no flowers to wear :
When the last rose on the sparse hedge is fair :
When the whole living world's flag flies half-mast :—
Then there shall come a last kiss.—Shall not it,
Full of a desperate sweetness unforeseen,
Something of all past history's raptures win,—
And shall the woman's wild eyes not be lit
With stranger light than of the setting sun ?
Will all life die not, when that kiss is done ?

SONNET XXV.

THE ANCIENT MOON.

O MOON, thou gazest on our London night !
Thou seest the Thames' black eddies roll along :
Thou hear'st coarse vulgar words, or snatch of song :
Jealous, thou battlest with the electric light.
Thou kissest thine old love, the obelisk white
Whom thou didst toy with in the unknown years :
Thou markest many a bridge with stately piers :
Thou followest steamboats in their throbbing flight.
Yet how thou sneerest at us in thine heart,—
Thou, most aristocratic of all things !—
Thou who hast seen the Assyrian priestess stand
Where pillars white abut on endless sand :
Thou who hast watched Gomorrha's black-haired kings,
And lent thy lustre to barbaric Art.

SONNET XXVI.

FIRST LOVE.

O FIRST love,—tender holy blind pure phase !—
 For then it seemeth to the soul that one
 And but one woman liveth,—that the sun
 Finds but one blossom worthy of his gaze.
 Is it a snow-drop ?—Then by green hedgeways
 We think no gleaming rose-bush ever grew !
 White is our flower,—so never hare-bells blue
 The sun loved, nor the rich gorse' golden blaze !
 Ah !—Some day blind eyes open, and we see
 On every side far fairer than the old
 New blossoms springing,—marvelling we behold
 Petunia, cowslip, heath, anemone :—
 As from our heart a sudden veil is rolled ;
 We revel in Woman's sweet diversity.

SONNET XXVII.

ENDLESS BEING.

IF one could live for ever !—carrying on
 The life of old Assyria to to-day !
 See era after era pass away
 Yet be oneself,—though all men else had gone.
 The sun to-day is the same sun that shone
 On Saul and David : why should man, I pray,
 Be less long-lived than its fierce golden spray ?—
 E'en the moon lives, though age has made her wan.
 O God, to live for ever !—passing through
 Each age, and knowing the ecstasy of each :
 The same gaze that to-day, quite youthful, falls
 On the dim dome and façade of St. Paul's
 Having beheld the Pyramids quite new
 And flashed response to Cleopatra's speech.

SONNET XXVIII.

FORGOTTEN JESUS.

THE world is a coquette. She kissed and clung
Round Jesus as an actress clings around
Her long-lost lover on a sudden found,—
And over him her tearful hands she wrung.
For nineteen centuries round his tomb she sung,
And her strong passion seemed to know no bound:—
Lithe craving supple amorous arms she wound
About the throat that on the black cross hung.
What was it worth?—She hath a new love now,
A young love,—and she marks within his eyes
The far-off light of summers of new skies,
And flowers unfaded ring his lineless brow:—
Christ and his centuries pass,—and, laughing, she
Flings white arms round the Twentieth Century.

SONNET XXIX.

THIS CENTURY AND THE NEXT.

THIS century knew Napoleon,—and it knew
Byron and Wordsworth, and its heart has heard
Measureless Hugo's century-equal word;
And it has seen the smoke of Waterloo.
It has seen France and Germany bestrew
The summer plains with dead: it marked the Third
Napoleon drop from empire:—it has stirred
With iron keels the sea's untroubled blue.
Now, nearing its august and solemn close,
It has seen May-time * in the Phoenix Park
Shudder at a crime than which no crime more dark
Has ever stained May's hawthorn or May's rose:
It has seen Revolution's first red spark:
Will its child see the towering flame?—God knows.

* Lord Frederick Cavendish and Mr. Burke were assassinated in the Phoenix Park, Dublin, on Saturday, May 6, 1882.

SONNET XXX.

LOST RICHES.

O RICHES of all the ages we have missed !—
Dark eyes, dark tresses, in old Eastern lands,—
Wonderful thrilling of electric hands,—
Lips fairer than all flowers, alas ! unkissed.
Blue tender veins on Cleopatra's wrist,—
Eyes gazing over Indian thirsty sands,—
Eyes watching wild waves break on Northern strands
Pine-shadowed ;—oh, the long heart-piercing list !—

And whom of all that long list have we seen ?
Poets, who have the eternal heart of Time
Mixed with your own in magnitude sublime,
Ye have kissed the lips it may be of one queen
Of love and song, and crowned her in your rhyme,—
One !—royal lips are numberless, I ween !

ON THE DEATH OF DR. CUMMING.

THE mighty stars pursue their course
And the waves break with ordered force,
 Heedless of man ;
All things flow outward from their source,
 As they began.

One prophet more whose rash weak thought
Set law and time and force at nought
 Has passed away :
And still the green bright spring is brought
 From winter grey.

The primrose and the crocus bold
Still fill with pale or with deep gold
 The grass of spring :
Still the first sure thrush as of old
 Starts up to sing.

The cowslips yellow and violets blue
Drape fields and banks in diverse hue ;
 Nought fails us yet ;
Each spring's soft head hath glory new
 For coronet.

As surely as summer comes, the rose
In all its old rich grandeur blows,
 And gardens shine,
And the fierce tiger-lily glows ;
 Then comes the vine.

The prophet who predicted all
Should end so soon, himself must fall :
 The world swings on.
Bright months flash by, dull seasons crawl,
 Till all are gone.

But when the fresh clear mornings break
On sea or shore or mountain-lake
 The same sun's might
Bids still the same sweet flowers awake
 And bathe in light.

The green immense smooth-curling seas
Shake lions' manes before the breeze
 And no man stays
The vast advancing files of these :
 They go their ways.

The rash-tongued seer himself is dead ;
But no rose blooms to-day less red :
 No bell less blue.
More light upon man's path is shed
 Than his thought knew.

He passes : and the stars awake,
And not one lessens for his sake
 Its wonted fire ;
Still hearts will bound, and hearts will break,
 At Love's desire !

Will there be one hour less of bloom,
Because he passes to his doom
 And leaves Love here ?
Man's is the light,—his is the gloom,
 His is the fear.

If there be judgment, 'tis for him
Within the death-land dark and dim :
 This world is bright ;
Ay, brighter now that prophet grim
 Is lost in night.

The birds may sing, the sun may shine,
The blue grapes ripen on the vine,
 The hill-tops gleam,
The wind may whisper to the pine
 Its latest dream :

The butterfly may love the rose,
The red bee in the hive repose
 Beside his queen,
Without one fear lest God disclose
 Hell's sudden sheen.

The emerald flies may buzz and wheel,
The lizard through the leaves may steal
 With sides that flash ;
The Last Day's thunder will not peal
 With sudden crash.

The fisher standing by the stream
May watch the silver salmon gleam
 Above the weir ;
God will not trumpet through his dream,
 " The end draws near ! "

The girl may pluck forget-me-not,—
Not dreading lest the stream turn hot,
 The flowers turn white,
As God in anger sears the spot
 With lightning-light.

The youth may watch his true love's eyes,
Without a fear lest horror rise
 Therein and dread
At sight of hell's fierce under-skies
 Of angry red.

The world awakes ; the prophet sleeps.
With laughter in its eyes it leaps
 Towards newer things :
And as its fruited corn it reaps,
 Its great heart sings !

Not yet its end is.—Many a day
Shall the brave world spin on its way
 Through joy and dole :
Through dawns of gold and eves of grey
 Its wheels shall roll.

While woman breathes, the world-heart glows
Most young and fervent ; while the rose
 Each year is red,
The world's tired spirit may repose,
 But is not dead !

July, 1881.

HARROW *v.* ETON AT LORD'S.

1881.

I.

JUST twenty years ago the same shouts sounded.

With boyish eager eyes I watched the field :
Watched the red ball that o'er the live hedge bounded ;
Joined in the merry cries that rang and pealed.

Would any, knowing his fate, live on I wonder ?

On the same hillside where my young dreams grew
The wave of Byron's life that burst in thunder
First gathered force, 'neath skies of stormless blue.

Would he have lived ? Would any, knowing the sorrow

And all the pain that love's near future brings,
The boyish life once spent, endure the morrow—
Not pass, content with games and boyish things ?

O Harrow fields that Byron loved, and splendour

Of Harrow skies, I think of you to-day !
Then sorrow softens to remembrance tender,
And blue sky breaks through London's chronic grey.

To-day I hear the shouts. My spirit glances

Straight back o'er twenty years. I hear the sound
As then I heard. My heart with pleasure dances,
When a grand Harrow hit o'erleaps the bound.

But then with sense of speechless desolation

The years weigh on me, like a mount of stone :
Years that began with songs and exultation,
Then left me in the starless dark, alone.

And through them gleam the eyes that first impelled me
Along love's road, and changed me to a man :
Led captive all my soul, and charmed and held me ;
Inspired each thought, and guided every plan.

How strange to think that these boy-hearts awaking
To life to-day, are ignorant indeed !
Yet that on each love's pitiless morning breaking
Will change the hearts that sing to hearts that bleed.

No spirit shall shun the love-doom waiting ready,
Ready to seize and shape to newer things.
All shall be whirled around Fate's frothing eddy,
Helpless as are i' the stream a moth's white wings.

Ye cannot pause. Meet ye your fate, quite fearless.
Here standing, after twenty years, again,
Watching as I with stony heart and tearless,
Confess that life is love, and love is pain.

II.

Ye know so little of what shall surely follow :
Your clear gaze centres on the cricket-green.
You Venus touches not, nor great Apollo ;
Nought is to you the golden-girdled queen.

Nought are her white arms eager for embraces—
Eager as ever, though her shrines may fall.
She waits. She peers into the young fresh faces.
She wonders which heart first will heed her call.

She wonders who will chant afresh her praises,
Gathering wild garlands from the wind-swept wold,
Crowning her now with fern or pink-tipped daisies ;
For silent are the lips which sang of old.

Nought is she to you.—Yet than rivers clearer
Shall ring some voice whose music waits afar.
Daily Fate brings the destined moment nearer,
As evening brings the sky its certain star.

Sweeter one day shall sound a girl's soft laughter
Than laugh of comrade brave, or trusty friend.
Theirs is one hour : but hers is the hereafter.
They triumph now : she triumphs till the end.

Touching her hand, ye shall forget to covet
The whitest flower that in earth's garden grows :
Hearing her voice, ye shall for ever love it :
Touching her lips, ye shall forget the rose.

Far sweeter things there are than ye are dreaming
In this strange world, where love is linked to pain ;
Eyes with a lovelier light than summer's gleaming.—
We mortals vanish. But the stars remain.

The stars of love for ever shine resplendent :
They lighted Byron on his lonely way.
They still abide, in love's train still attendant,
And they shall light you. Ye shall have your day.

Some years for Harrow toil and Harrow pleasure—
Short years, glad years. Then as for him, for each
One hour of rapture maddening beyond measure ;
Fruition, so it seems, within your reach.

Some years of Harrow labour, Harrow gladness ;
Clear skies of spring-time, summer's sumptuous light ;
Then frenzied passion—then despair and sadness—
Then twilight, gathering darkness. Then the night.

A POET'S LETTER TO HIS SON.

So you would be a poet? Well, if you
Have in you the true fire and strength of soul
It will in the end find egress, doubt it not.
But first of all there may be many a road
Full hard to traverse, and full many a night
Of weary watching, and full many a pang.
To be a poet is the greatest thing
On earth, and, being the greatest, the most hard
To compass. Truly wise-browed Wordsworth said,
"Great is the glory, for the strife is hard."

And this strife shows itself in various ways :
If you have in you the true secret force
And fiery inward yearning, they will lead
Your spirit forth from the thick ranks of men,
And you from early days will be alone.
Alone at school you will be, and alone
At college ; or, if not alone in fact,
Alone in the recesses of your heart.
Remember you are not as others are—
And this will show itself in little things
As well as in large things : the sunset-fire
Over the Nuneham woods, the Oxford towers,
The bright marsh-marigolds, will not ever be
The same to you as to your friends around ;
This is at once your glory and your doom.
The ripples of Isis, or of Cam, will seem
To you not as to others : o'er their flow
Strange dreams will brood, and draw you after them.

If you have in you a true poet's heart,
Woman will be to you from the very first
Sacred, and all the poems you will write
In after days will fall short every one
Of fully expressing what she is to you—
What most of all she was when, young and fair,
And bearing first love's blossoms in her hands,
She burst upon you sweeter than a dream.

Ah ! that pure dream of first love. You will date
From this your flowing tide of songfulness
And your fierce search for fame ; all poets do.
For years it will be just your one desire
To crown one bright-eyed fairy English girl
With the green bay-leaves of eternal fame :
Your daily thoughts, your nightly dreams, will be
Ever of her, and you for years will hold
That she can have no equal in the world.

Oh ! let the sweet and sacred fancy last
Long as it may,—for ever, if it will,—
For never through all time will any gift
So full of saving guardianship be yours.
Are you upon the silent midnight sea,
Sailing ? Her face smiles at you from the stars.
Are you upon the solemn mountain-peaks,
Where the high thunders and the lightnings brood
And the blue gentian blossoms ? There again
Her spirit is with you, pure and strong and sweet
And motherly almost, for first love hath
In it such holy power as mothers have
Over one much-loved son.—Or are you set
'Mid coarse companions whose light jests ring out
Discordant ? Then the pure girl-face again

Rises before you, and it shields you quite,
Like some pure golden sacred sunset-cloud,
From rude companionship and taint of soul.

Yes : just because you have in you more power
Of seeing beauty,—beauty of form and face,
True beauty of eye and waist and lip and hand—
Beauty besides of flower within the hedge,
And crest of wave, and quivering blade of grass,
And crimson foam-flecked sea-weed—just because
These things are more to you than unto them,
And woman most of all is more than all,
You will encounter from your rougher friends
Endless misunderstanding. This indeed
All poets have to meet and battle with.

Ay, you will find it more than hard to bear
That, when Queen Beauty to your poet's heart
Is just the simple type of all things pure
And holy and sweet and seemly, and the embrace
Of love the fitting and eternal type
Of the true deathless blending of the soul
With God, and woman's form the noblest form
That ever yet the sculptor-ages reached—
You'll find it bitter and hard to agony point
That friends, and some friends too who mean you well
After their fashion, should step in with their
Prosaic cursed common commentary,
And turn your love to lust, your passion high
To carnal low desire, and your true songs
To orgy songs,—transferring into all
Themselves, their nature, and their character.

Yes : this is hard—and beyond bearing hard
You'll find it when you, seeking God himself

Within his heaven of blue or in his night
Of moon and stars, or on his boundless sea,
Are called a sceptic and an atheist.
When you have tried to point beyond the church,
And far beyond the priest, and to exalt
The thoughts of women to the God who lives
Outside the barriers of our mongrel creeds,
Then to be called a godless faithless bard
(Because, forsooth, you struggle as you may
To follow in Christ's own fearless creedless steps),
This is exceeding bitter ; bitterer
Than ever if, as it too often is,
The taunt is flung from women whom you love,
And for whose souls' true welfare you would die.

But you would die to lift them closer up
To God and truth and liberty, and not
To tighten their church fetters—God forbid !
'Tis love that you would die for : not a creed —
The very spirit of justice : not a church.

And you will find in you a mighty power
Of love which never can be satisfied.
This is your glory, and your peril too :—
For you will weary of one lovely face
And long for others, loving still the first ;
And your quick sympathy will spring to life
At the mere slightest touch of woman's hand.
Women will seek you—women always do
Seek poets : they will bring their griefs to you,
And you will sometimes find it hard to say
Where the strict perfect path of duty lies.
For you will feel with your quick poet's heart
That God made flowers all different, and made

All women different, and that their charm
 Lies chiefly in contrast (like the charm of flowers)—
 So that (no quibbling ! I'm in earnest quite)
 You'll feel you cannot with full force of love
 Love number one, save with the tender help
 Of number two : and here again you'll find
 That what is pure and noble unto you
 Will be degraded by your listeners.

It must be so : one sees it must be so.
 Each reads himself into the poem he reads,
 And brings back what he came with ; nor, perhaps,
 Can any save a poet apprehend
 The spiritual divine surpassing help
 That woman gives,—yes, that each woman gives
 If she be noble and great, and gives because
 She is herself and not another soul.
 Never, perhaps, will any understand,
 Save only poets, the soul-agony
 —Deep sorrow of soul it is, and not of flesh—
 Of being pent with one, however fair,
 Pent in a prison, though the walls be gold
 And window-bars bright silver ; therein pent,
 While just outside the summer airs are sweet
 (So very sweet !) and green trees toss and wave
 And faces (such sweet faces !) pass the bars,
 With smiling mouths you'd give the world to kiss,
 And souls you'd give the world to understand.

“ Ah God ! the golden golden hair,” you say,
 “ The golden gracious hair—but there is black,
 And there is brown, and lo ! that woman there
 With the new wondrous subtle changeful grey
 In her deep eyes, and such a soul in them !

Lo ! now this other with the Spanish mien
And eyes like clear brown waters in a well :
Oh God, I am so tired of golden hair ! ”
So you will, in your golden prison, say.

Well, well, these passionate yearnings you must face
And give to God ; they have their meaning—yes :
And some will be fulfilled, but more will not.
The heart of man—the heart of woman, too—
(These yearnings visit women's hearts as well)
Can never be quite satisfied in life.
Life is so short, a wretched meagre thing,
For human aspiration's infinite,
And no explorer, be he worth the name,
Would ever find our planet large enough :
No, if a traveller had a poet's heart,
No central Africa would e'er content,
But he would long to sail the airy heights,
Traverse the ether, visit star on star,
Thread the wild woods of Sirius or of Mars,
And pitch tents in the hollows of the moon !

And then you feel—this you will surely feel—
That you could give high gifts, as well as take,
That you could help and *be* helped : every soul
Finds in another soul a mine of wealth,
And there are sacred mines in poets' hearts
That open not save only at woman's hand,—
And special mines that need some special hand,
And if untouched by this open not at all.
And so it is with women : mine on mine
Of sacred untold wealth they year by year
Store up, and often death comes ere the hand
That might have won the wealth is sent by God.

This world is very lamentable : yes—
Of all its cruel bitter grievous things
The cruellest and bitterest and the most
Grievous it is that souls who might have helped
Each other past the reach of mortal words
Here never meet, or if they meet at all,
Meet just to part. You catch a moment's glimpse
Of some fair face, and see the silent soul
There waiting untouched, deep within the eyes,
And then the carriage or a railway train
Whirls the fair face away, and you are left
So much the poorer through eternity.

“Have faith in the next world,” the preacher says.
Ah ! yes—“have faith, have faith”—’tis easily said :
But not so easy is it to have faith
That will result in action, or in hope.
Shall I, for instance, find amid the mass
Of bright angelic wings and heavenly harps
That somebody to whom I spoke seven words
About the weather at a cricket match,
Yet whom beyond all skies and clouds of time
I shall remember—yes, each shade of the eyes
When they turned towards or further from the light,
Each shade of these, and every curve of cheek
Or throat, and each inflection of the voice—
Shall I find her in heaven ? Never : though
From side to side I hunted, passing through
The gleaming corridors with watchful eyes.

“Have faith.” *Some* faith you must have, it is true :
No great poetic work can e’er be done
Without a faith of some sort, be it but
A faith in love’s high possibilities.

And in this age of Science, when the stars
Are analysed, and the sun's garment rent
That we may pry into his heart of flame,
And when we test the jewels on God's throne
And in his crown, and cry out eagerly,
"Here's a false diamond—mere paste after all!"
—In this our age, when atoms are our gods,
When Providence becomes an atom-whirl
And man's free-will one wheel of a machine,
We need a faith, if true work would be done.

But what's the faith to be? A faith in man?
A faith in God, a proud faith in ourselves?
A faith in Herbert Spencer? Or a faith
In Art and in nude sculpture? Or a faith
In Arthur Roberts and the last Burlesque?
All these we have, but they are strangely mixed.

Or is it to be the faith that Wordsworth had,
The faith of Hugo, Dante, and of all
Great deep-souled poets—a great faith in God
Apart from creeds and churches? God, who has
The voices of the seas for ministers,
And for his robes the sunset's far-stretched fires,
And for his throne this universe of things.

To come to details.—If you would win fame,
And fame not merely transitory, seek
To avoid the tricks of language of the day.
Put trust in the great English language used
By Milton and by Shakespeare, and the rest
Who came before you: do not think a girl
Is all described if you have called her "white"
And "sweet," with "overflow of fragrant hair"
And "flower-soft breast" and "ardent amorous hands."

You may love roses ; but you must not love
 Your mental rose-garden to such excess
 That they crop up in every other line
 (Though roses are like women, I admit ;
 A poet cannot do without them. Still
 "Be temperate in all things," even these).

Seek for new epithets ; but follow not
 Too far the realistic modern craze.
 Keep Zola's manner out of English verse ;
 It won't improve it—though it has its power.
 Don't talk of "great sweet sunsets," or of flames
 That "burn and yearn ;" and if those rose-red lips
 And rose-red cheeks of modern verse *must* come,
 Why use them sparingly—yes, I beg it of you !
 "Blown hair" is very wearisome to me :
 "Blown air" I always felt was incorrect
 (Though very popular with certain schools)
 For how the thing which blows can thus be blown
 I never understood : but let it pass.

If you could write a poem without "foam"
 Ever occurring—why, it would be *new* !
 "Supreme" and "great" and "subtle" and the like
 Are very tempting, very perilous, words.
 So are French metres, Ballades and all such ;
 Upon the whole, they're always best in French
 And will not bear transplanting : then again,
 Above all things avoid the Browningsque
 Swinburnian and Rossettian complex style,
 For this begins by being obscure, and ends
 By "wide white wanton foam-crests" and "blown hair."
 Choose your own style—it should be part of you,
 Choose *you* perhaps, rather than you choose it.

Let it be one with the meaning. Sonnets are
The safest vehicle for amorous thought,
Sonnets and Lyrics. Keep the thundering Ode
For large occasions and immense events.
For swift half-conversational speech and thought
You'll find blank verse the most convenient,
And take it all in all the supplest far
Of all the English metres,—and it has
(Like the French Alexandrine in great hands)
An almost infinite expansive power.
Heroic couplets never quite forget
The clank of their own fetters ; they are bound
By coupling-irons, and are aware of it :
Most free they are sometimes when they may add
Another iron, and use to clinch a thought
A slashing triplet for a good wind-up.
But, on the whole, in Lyrics and blank verse
You'll find the English language most at ease
And (so you but steer clear of “sweet” and “foam !”)
In these you'll get full room to evolve your thought
And hurl your passion into melody.

The poet singeth “best who loveth best,”
And never was great Sonnet written yet
Or noble Lyric sung, but some fair face
Looked o'er the singer's shoulder at the lines,
And, as he wrote, he felt his lady's hand
Rest light upon him, and the task was sweet.

For, if a poet once has loved with deep
First love, whatever the result may be,
He bears away with him his lady's face
Pictured and fixed for ever in his heart ;
And, ever after, he can see her eyes

And hear her voice,—and when he sings, he sings
As unto her—and every book he writes
He dedicates to her within his mind,
And wonders, “ Will she read it ? Will she know
I love her still, and will she be displeased
To know I love her still ? ” He sees, perhaps,
With his mind’s eye upon some summer day
His lady seated on a brown oak bench
Within some Rectory garden, while behind
The Church stands out against the summer sky,
Tall standard rose-trees and green shrubs around
—He sees her sitting there, his last new book
Within her hand, cutting the rapid leaves,
And wonders, “ Will the love-songs move her now,
And will the soft tears gather in her eyes,
And will past hours be with her ? ”—so he dreams.
Well, dreams are dreams,—but sweeter than the truth
Full often, and Romance whence springeth love
In poets’ hearts and in most women’s hearts
(Women are poets all, potentially)—
Romance hath never aught to do indeed
With marriage and its tame accessories.
The heart of woman, and the poet’s heart,
Loves everything uncommonplace : a swift
Elopement, with the family coach in chase
Splashing the rainy pools upon the moor ;
A brigand lover (Hernani—not the king !) ;
The window for an entrance to the bower
Of sweet young love—the window, not the door,
The commonplace and knocker-hung hall door !
Love in disguise ; a dainty secret route
To the flower-haunted assignation-place
Far in the forest—not the open road,
With farmers’ carts upon it. Love forbid !

Struggle against despair : the spirit of it
Is rife in this our age of subtle thought.
Follow not in the steps of him who wrote
"The City of Dreadful Night"—a genius-soul
Who has passed to Death's dim City since he wrote
And found it fairer than the City of Life
It may be : follow not his darkling road.
In spite of all despair, we still must own
How great a thing it is to be alive ;
To see the roses (yes, it must be said !)—
To see the roses, and to feel the sun ;
To see the very simplest common things—
The flies that dance i' the sunshine, and the fish
That hurls his gleaming body from the pool,
And the grey-blue sea-thistles on the shore :
These all are fair to see. A girl's gold hair,
Bright in the sunlight, is a lovely thing,
And sweet it is the breath of life to draw
To-day, although to-morrow we may die.

Yes : even sad things, sorrows of our past,
When far-off win a crown ; old loves are mixed
In some strange way with fragrance of dead flowers
And glory of far-off sunsets, and they pass
Into some strange unutterable calm.

Music redeemeth all things—it restores
The past, and washes history's stains away,
Making all life dramatic and even crime
Subservient to its sceptre. If you be
True bard, the sound of music's sudden notes
—Ay, even the sound of music in the street
Sometimes, when there's a witchery in the air—
May have the power to hurl you centuries back

In vision, and to set you dreaming fast
Of Egypt's dark queen, or the towers of Troy,
Or Sinai with the people camped below.
All history to the poet is one page,
And all loves to the poet are one fair
Wild dream of love, as unto God they are :
God, who uplifting poets by the hand
Shares with his poets his eternity,
Draws unto him the universal life
And revels in its vast triumphant tides.

And, having thus the universal life
For sea to sail upon and air to breathe,
Be not surprised or over-much disturbed
If the mere partial poor life of to-day
Gives little recompense and crowns you not.
You have before you endless scope and time,
Even the far future's unsailed boundless sea
And skies no stars have lighted,—where the dark
Silent abysmal solemn lampless void
Hath not yet trembled at the high God's hand.

This is before you, where your song may shine
E'en as a star, and win new tracts to light.

SONNET.

TO PHILIP BOURKE MARSTON.

O THOU who seeing not with thy mortal eyes
Yet hast the sacred spirit of sight to see
The soul of beauty in Nature more than we ;
Yea, thou who seest indeed the sunset skies
And all the blue wild billows as they rise
And summer sweetness of each bower and tree,—
Who seest the pink glad thyme-tuft kiss the bee—
The silver wing that o'er the grey wave flies :
We hail thee, singer who hast sight indeed
If to see Beauty and Truth and Love be sight ;
For whom the soul of the white rose is white,
And fiery-red the fierce-souled red sea-weed ;
We hail thee,—thee whom all things love and heed,
Pouring through thee their music and their might.
March 7, 1882.

SONNET.

LÉON GAMBETTA.

THIS is his title of honour. On the day
When, dealing out across the circling snows
Their countless fierce-tongued cannons' iron blows,
The German hordes around his city lay ;
When ravaged armies knew not whom to obey,
And half the Imperial Guard in red repose
Slept in the meadows, and no man arose
With any voice save only of dismay :
Then he stood up, and with clear scornful glance
Defied the intruder. Now he lieth dead,
Smitten by keener than the German lance :
Yet by our sons' sons shall it not be said,
"This man alone, when all men's hopes had fled,
Despaired not of the Republic, or of France."
Jan. 4, 1883.

VENUS AND THE EVANGELISTS.

GATHERED upon the beach one day I saw
A group of preachers.—They had made a square
With four green common benches, and they stood
Within the square—just ordinary men,
Shopkeepers, tradesmen, grocers, what you will.
They stood within their green-bench-guarded square,
With the wide grey indifferent sea behind,
And preached their rendering of the word of God.
And with them stood some stumpy servant-maids,
Sallow, ill-dressed, and awkward ; and they sang
With help of these their hardly sweet-toned hymns.
And then along the beach there came a form
Slender and graceful, robed in quiet black,
A woman,—one it may be of the band
Whom some call “gay,” and some “unfortunate.”
She listened to the hymn, and soon received
A hymn-book from a stumpy servant-maid,
Red-cheeked, red-handed, and red-ribboned too.
She stood there, leaning on the green top-bar
Of one of the four benches, just outside
The hollow angel-guarded preachers’ square.
—A myriad thoughts flew through me as I watched.
“Lo ! here is Venus, just outside the heaven
Of these the Galilean folk,” I thought ;
“And yet her grace of mien and attitude
Hath surely something in itself of heaven.”
She leaned against the bench, and every limb
Took of itself the right most fitting *pose* ;

She seemed a sudden message sent from Greece,
And round her the weird gospel-music rang,
And that top-bar of the dividing bench
On which she leant seemed like God's judgment-bar,
Or like a gulf between the righteous fixed
And stately Venus on the other side,
And all the ages' strife seemed symbolized
By those gaunt preachers safe within the square,
They and their women-followers, and the slight
Poor fair sad woman in her black silk dress
And white straw hat with flowers of lavender
Who leant with such unconscious grace of form
Against the bench,—against it, but outside.

“And yet,” I thought, “is God within that square,
Along with those gaunt-eyed repulsive men
And sallow stumpy women, or is he
Perhaps outside the bench-square sometimes too,—
Just as the grey-waved calm far-stretching waste
Of water yonder hath but little heed
Of these four benches? Is not God outside
As well as inside—with his grey-waved sea
And this grey-eyed poor woman?

Surely, yes!”

SOPHIA PEROVSKAIA.*

BLUE-EYED, fair-haired, a girl in outward seeming,
With lips, men held, that only cared to sing,
When thy foot passed along the meadows dreaming
Soft dreams and tender of the gold-haired Spring—

When other maidens dreamed with longing wonder
Of love, thou crowned with Spring's most loving light
Beneath blue skies wast dreaming of the thunder,
Beneath the morn wast dreaming of the night.

High-born, thou didst forsake the lordly places ;
Thy young heart thrilled at Freedom's trumpet-call :
Thou wanderedst forth, a light for poor men's faces ;
Love, wealth, repose,—thou didst surrender all.

And has not yet from our free isle resounded
One song, one hymn of passionate love for thee,
Who, when the tyrant's red-stained deeds abounded,
Didst say, " One soul in Russia still is free " ?

When thou didst strike, were all our singers staggered
At thy vast force of soul that none could say,
" A strong god at a touch turned pale and haggard,
A Czar before a girl's stroke passed away " ?

I would not die without one true word spoken
Whereby, if but for one short moment's space,
The English chill grim silence may be broken :
I love, who never looked upon thy face.

* See note A, at end of volume.

Singing, I hail thee from a land that never
For all its errors, countless though they are,
Stooped to endure, nor will it stoop for ever
To endure, the smile or sceptre of a Czar.
The message of our English ringing fountains,
The message of the fells, to thee I bear :
For thee speaks once again from cloud-crowned mountains
The voice at which world-tyrannies despair.
The greeting of our English oaks and willows,
The greeting of our flowers, I send to thee ;
The royal love-song of our kingless billows,
And our sun's song, wherewith he loves our sea :
The solemn kiss of England's pure-souled daughters
That should have been, that one day will be, thine ;
The song of stars that gleam o'er English waters ;
The song that makes the enchanted night divine :
The song of English cliff and gold-flowered hollow ;
The chant of poet-souls as yet unborn,
Whose stronger footsteps on my step shall follow ;
The love-song of the winds that woo the morn :
All these are thine for ever.—When Love hearkened
With listening heart and tearful eyes to thee,
Thou then didst choose the loveless road that darkened ;
Beloved by Time, didst choose Eternity.
Behind, a thousand flowers of varied pleasure ;
In front, the scentless air, the starless gloom !
A life that might yield joy in sumptuous measure,
Glad rainbow-hopes, behind. In front, the tomb !
Yet thou didst choose the tomb. With stern lips firmer
Than hers by whom foul Marat's fate was planned
Thou chocest death. Thou diedst without a murmur,
Thy white hand locked in Charlotte Corday's hand.

LOVE AND TIME.

No true love passes.—Does the night
Steal all its glory from the day?
When once the sun is put to flight,
Are all the heavens for ever grey?
Nay! through the heights and depths of space
The fiery-prowed wild star-ships race,
The Armadas of immensity:
The waves gleamed blue beneath the sun,
But, now the golden day is done,
The silver moon may kiss the sea.

There is no end to time or space.
New suns beyond our sun will rise:
Age cannot alter true love's face,
Nor dim the glory in love's eyes.
Love is eternal, ever-new:
Just as the waves each morn are blue;
Just as the skies each morn are fair;
Just as each autumn's golden sheaves
Shine out afresh, and golden leaves
Glitter each autumn through the air.

But all else passes. Thrones must pass;
The lordliest shrines and temples fall:
Death's sickle gathers in the grass;
No loiterer can escape his call.
The gods whom man has made and crowned
Lie pale, dismembered, on the ground:
Man bade them reign; Time bids them flee;—
Where once were prisons, now is corn;
Where blossoms smiled, are wastes forlorn;
Where rivers rippled, roars the sea.

The Roman Cæsars had their hour :
 The Roman legions poured along,
 Beheld the English woods a-flower
 And heard the English billows' song.
 Where are they now ? The waves that saw
 Their legions land with little awe,
 Watch iron-armoured fleets to-day :
 The waves reck little for they know
 That nations, like the whirling snow,
 Melt into nought and pass away.

The Gallic Cæsar's empire rose ;
 The whole world trembled at his tread :
 He gave the thunder no repose ;
 At his sole word the streams ran red.
 He changed his sceptre for a sword ;
 He longed to say, " I am the lord
 Of every land beneath the sun.
 There were two Rulers—God and I ;
 We threw with dice for sovereignty ;
 Jehovah lost : Napoleon won ! "

Yet in the lonely sea-beat isle
 The second Cæsar passed away,
 And once again the world might smile,
 And once again keep holiday.
 The corn was red at Waterloo,
 But there to-day the sky is blue :
 Two spectres pass. The flowers have heard
 One whisper, " I am Wellington ! "
 And one, " I am Napoleon ! "
 Their soldiers rise not at their word.

Time watched pale Cleopatra's kiss
Thrill Antony with sweet despair :
Time heard the small smooth aspick hiss ;
Time saw the towers of Ilium flare.
In pre-historic dateless hours
Among great white unnamed strange flowers
Time saw the kiss of bird and bird :
When dying Jesus raised his eyes
Fast-darkening to the lurid skies
Time caught his last heart-broken word.

Time saw the first fair woman's eyes
Glitter with love when life was young ;
When young stars watched from cloudless skies,
And ruby-throated songsters sung.
Time saw the first kiss, and the last
Will see when passion's moods are past
And blind oblivion waits for man—
Time, who beheld the pencil seized
By God's swift hand when he well-pleased
Sketched out our planet's primal plan.

Upon the borders of the Thames
The wolf once prowled, along the shore :
The banks were dense with matted stems
Of vegetation rank and hoar.
Now, in the sun's first golden hour,
The glorious grey old Abbey tower
Shines out against the morning skies ;
Where birds built nests on mount or knoll,
Beneath the moonlight sweethearts stroll
And dream within each other's eyes.

Town, sweethearts, Abbey, all shall pass :
 The Thames shall wash a houseless shore ;
 Shall ripple past wild leagues of grass ;
 Shall hear no human voice nor oar.
 Or in far epochs, it may be,
 The dreary breakers of the sea
 May roll above the London squares :
 Where now the lilac waves its plume
 Of purple, shall be sunless gloom
 And Arctic snowflakes on the airs.

The fair white city on the Seine
 That heard the chief of poets sing,—
 That watched the triumph and the pain
 Of Hugo, and that crowned him king,—
 That, at the last wild century's close,
 Watched Revolution as it rose
 Sea-like with blood-besprinkled surge,—
 That saw the untrembling guillotine
 Cleave through the white neck of a queen,
 And heard the tocsin's cruel dirge,—

This city, too, shall change and pass ;
 Of all things earthly nought abides :
 Be walls of iron or beaten brass,
 Yet Time surmounts them and derides.
 One day the glory of the Czar
 Was glory as of sun or star,
 A splendour measureless, sublime :
 The next day at his feet the shell
 Burst madly, and the White Czar fell,
 'Mid laughter from the lips of Time !

But love abides, though all things change
 Though nations plunge into the night ;
Though all around wax dim and strange ;
 Though aging stars give little light.—
We float along our century's stream,
We sing and toil, and love and dream,
 But lo ! we near the ocean's marge :
Our river-century soon will end
And, swelling into waves, descend
 Into the sea-waves fierce and large.

Then what shall last ? What thing shall be ?
 What shall the twentieth century bear ?
What ships shall sail upon its sea ?
 What new stars sparkle through its air ?
We know not : only this we know,—
That love, though wild years come and go,
 Will wander calm-eyed, gathering flowers ;—
A thousand centuries are as one
Day to the never-dying sun,
 And unto love a few short hours.

SONNET.

THE CRUCIFIXION OF MANHOOD.

(FOR GOOD FRIDAY, 1880.)

TO-DAY, as ever, pale mankind is nailed
Upon the bitter cross.—The people go
To weep false tears o'er overrated woe,
Weeping because one far-off fair life failed.
And what of heights of manhood left unscaled
To-day, because this piteous farce runs so?
What of the sufferers whom to-day lays low,—
At whose lives' torments Christ himself had quailed?

Ah! shall there be an Easter morn for these,—
As through the blood-stained centuries not one day
Hath not loomed like Good Friday gaunt and grey
Upon them? When shall mankind's passion cease?
From his dark tomb, barred there since time began,
What Easter torch shall light the spirit of man?

ISOLINA.

LINES WRITTEN ON AGAIN READING AN OLD ROMANCE.

O ISOLINA, loved in boyish fashion,
Loved when the heart was nobly pure and free,
Again I read thy tale of love and passion,
Again forget the world and gaze on thee.

Romance beyond romance is in thy story :
I read the wild tale thirty years ago—
Yet still I see the sunlight's ceaseless glory
Poured over plains and hills of Mexico.

And still, though thirty years have done their tragic
Grim work on heart and weary brain of mine,
Thy dark-fringed eyes retain their glow, their magic,
And mine grow younger as they gaze in thine.

The boy grew strong for thee, and manhood's yearning
Throbbled through his heart and life became a dream :
The man to-day, on his own steps returning,
Regains his boyhood as thy dark eyes gleam.

Thou filledst boyhood with wild thirst and hunger
Of ardent passion, fiery, unexpressed :
Thou makest manhood thirty long years younger,
And bringest somewhat of repose and rest.

What are the loves and passions intervening,
The passions that we call so real and strong ?
Nought—weak indeed—how dull, devoid of meaning !
The boy's first passion is the theme for song.

Thou wast my earliest love-queen, even far earlier
Than she who swayed my heart by Northern seas ;
Thou smiling under skies more blue and pearlier,
And wandering 'mid strange tropic flowers and trees.

When life flowed on, when the boy's heart grew older,
Was any riper passion half so wild ?
As life progresses, our tired hearts turn colder :
The boy loves best, while still in part a child.

So, queen of high romance, take this song smiling
At the old tale—yet smiling through its tears.
How few real loves, for all their soft beguiling,
Have held a poet's heart for thirty years !

Not even the waves round English white cliffs dancing
Allure me, like that sunlit land of thine :
The land of silvery speech, and eyes swift-glancing,
And limbs whose every movement seems divine.

O dream-wrought flower which I shall never gather,
Flower blossoming sweetly in those sunlit wilds,
Take this, song's tribute,—nay, receive thou rather
The man's love, even as thou hadst the child's !

POST-MORTEM SURPRISES.

I.

If there be any life beyond the tomb,
How full of strange surprises must it be
For those who, struggling upward from death's gloom,
Behold new sunlight gild new shores and sea !

Amidst the gladness will not sadness lurk ?
We are so wedded here to our own view,
To our own dreams,—Jew, Christian, heathen, Turk—
It will be hard to find that nought we knew.

The Christian dying, and cursing as he dies
The poet who believed that love was fair—
It will be hard, beneath heaven's golden skies,
To see his Jesus kiss a woman's hair.

It will be very hard (our minds are small)
For those who worshipped at the Virgin's feet
To know she had a husband after all,
And found the joys of marriage pure and sweet.

And for the man of science strong and proud,
Who peered beneath the billows of the sea,
And pierced beyond the walls of mist and cloud,
And read the past, and read futurity :

The man before whose ardent gaze unveiled
Creation shone,—who named them one by one,
The stars that through the black night slowly sailed,—
Who faced the soulless Force that steers the sun :

The man who would permit mankind to sink,
Sad soul by soul, unpitied, to its doom,
And stand upon the abyss, close by the brink,
And gaze with steady eyes far through the gloom :

The man whose sombre wish it is to be
Alone for ever, with no God to speak ;
Alone with darkness on the godless sea,
Alone with sunrise on the mountain-peak ;

Alone with love's high rapture, which for him
Would be discounted if a God were there
(The sculptor's presence makes each stately limb
Of woman to the thinker seem less fair) :

The man whose soul, though pride within it lies,
Hath something of the greatness none the less
Of the vast God whose being he denies,
Tempered by man's eternal littleness :

The man who, rather than bow down before
The paltry God the Churches' hands have made,
Finds God within the sunlight on the shore
Or in the silent forest's moonlit shade :

It will be somewhat hard for him to know
That this world was not all ! His one despair
Will be to find that God is living, though
God left no track upon the starlit air.



It will be hard for Pharisees to own
That there is sweetness in a harlot's eyes :
It will be hard for kings to leave a throne,
And own that flatterers' words were mostly lies.

It will be strange to Christian eyes to see
Their Lord and Master in a lower place,
Perhaps, than thousands worshipped less than he ;
To mark some weakness in his soul and face.

All will be wild surprise,—all must be new.
Yet shall we find, if heavenly life be given,
The most unselfish head was wisest too,—
The heart that loved the most knew most of heaven.

II.

For by our deeds, and by our deeds alone,
God judges us,—if righteous God there be.
Creeds are as thistle-down wind-tost and blown,
But deeds abide throughout eternity.

It matters little, so that love be there,
Whether you think that legends have their day
Then pass, with all they held of foul or fair,
Or whether still, Church-pent, you praise and pray.

It matters little whether you discern
In Venus' limbs a sweetness past man's speech,—
Heaven in the rose, a glory in the fern,
A million jewels on the sunlit beach ;

Or whether you elect to burn and pant
For heavenly splendours glittering past the tomb,
Heedless that God, withholding these, would grant
Your eyes a sight of leagues of furze in bloom.

Whether you hold that Christ revealed to man
The sweetness of the land beyond the grave,
Or that Keats felt as never mortal can
The sweetness of the earth he came to save :

Whether you deem that Musset felt the whole
Of young love's rapture as none else can feel,
Or that the wild bright ocean's very soul
Was Byron's, past all question or appeal :

Whether you worship Shakespeare as God's son
And Hugo as God's son, in very deed,
Or in the older manner worship one,
One God-man only, and nought else concede :

Whether you hold that Dante brought to light
For man pure love, as pure love is to be,
And pierced the darkness of hell's lampless night
Retaining still song's tongue, and eyes to see :

Whether you hold that Turner once revealed,
Revealed for ever, perfect landscape-art ;
That through the song of Shelley music pealed,
Pure as from pure depths of God's very heart :

All matters little.—Worship God in Christ,
Or in the blossoms, or within the sun ;
Be heathen, Christian—but be not enticed
By any creed to leave true work undone.

One man will love the pleasures of the earth,
Another long for pleasures in the sky ;
One finds his music in a young girl's mirth,
And on her lips his immortality :

Another deems that human love is vain,
That only in Christ God's likeness must be sought ;
Another toils through a long life to gain
A scholar's insight into ancient thought :

Nought matters save our deeds.—If right we do,
God is with us, Jehovah is our friend :
If self we worship, though our creed be true
We shall be found without God at the end.

SONNETS.

SONNET I.

ON READING "WIND-VOICES," BY PHILIP
BOURKE MARSTON.

"WIND-VOICES"! Yes: the wind's own voice is here,
The voice of every wind;—the voice that goes
Straight to the soft heart of the listening rose;
The voice that makes the seamen quake for fear
When the grim angry white-lipped reefs rise sheer
To leeward; and the voice that love's heart knows
When on the summer breeze a whisper grows
Yet more intense, more passionately clear.

Here is the thunder of the wind at sea,
And echo of the voice of passion's storm,
And loving message of the gentle warm
West Wind,—and here the North Wind's revelry:
And here the voice that makes the midnight strong
With love's despair transfigured into song.

SONNET II.

TO P. B. M.

WHEN the sweet golden unforeseen surprise
 Of the eternal morning on thee breaks
 And sudden ripples from the large light-lakes
 Flood with swift brilliance thine awaking eyes,—
 When the old weary dream of sorrow dies
 For ever, and thy soul its pathway takes
 Through regions where the heart of poet aches
 No longer, nor the heart of lover sighs :—
 Then, women thou hast loved will first await
 Thy coming ; I will stand aside for these.
 But when their forms have passed outside the gate
 To greet thee on the outer terraces,
 That foremost greeting finished, then let none
 Than my soul sooner, see thee see the sun.

SONNET III.

“ —Waits till the ship already in sight be free
 To bear him back to his far natal shore,—
 Back through the darkness and the awful sea.”
—Philip Bourke Marston.

YES, this is our reward.—Not life's fair dreams,
 But the new-wakened and majestic sense
 That after silent years of pain intense
 Light, marvellous light, behind the hill-top gleams.
 Not by life's pleasant blossom-bordered streams
 To find our long-delayed large recompense,
 But in soul-thrilling joy that through the dense
 Dark worldly clogging air with golden beams
 Darts on a sudden downward :—the wild hope
 That not much longer shall this pain endure,—
 This agony of fierce desire to cope
 With all love's foes in wrestle close and sure ;
 That Fate shall free, ere long, our long-leashed breath
 For the great charge along the slopes of death.

SONNET IV.

To P. B. M.

IN MID-STREAM.

Not to the placid heights of middle age
Let you and I with loitering steps ascend.
Nay, let us perish in the strife, O friend,
Where round the standard most the war-waves rage.
If this be life—to move from stage to stage
And watch life's passion dwindle till the end
And slowly all our power of love expend,
Life then is poorer for each added page.
Nay! If our love and passion may not grow,
And all the fire within our spirits gleam
With steadier, stronger, and diviner glow
Daily, mere living is a soulless dream.—
Love ever: Perish, if it must be so:
But perish, buffeting the sweet mid-stream.

SONNET V.

THE VICTORY.

A SPIRIT wrestled through the lonely night
With God,—until the cold grey dawn shone clear.—
But neither won. They closed again in sheer
Ecstatic struggle when the sun took flight.
Through the long hours with alternating might
They wrestled, till the pale stars shook with fear,
And even the morning's clarion in man's ear
Doubted to ring,—so mastering was the sight.
But when the sun was up, the strife was o'er.
For once the human spirit had prevailed,
And Jacob was avenged for evermore.—
By human love the Godhead was assailed
And vanquished. Man and God met eye to eye,
And man's was the stupendous victory.

SONNET VI.

A DREAM.

IN a strange dream I passed beyond the host
I led, and stood upon the field alone.—
Round me were corpses pale and overthrown ;
No living friend,—but many a blood-stained ghost
Beaconed in front the fires from post to post :
I heard the ringing passionate trumpets blown ;
Ten thousand eyes were focussed in my own ;
Like endless waves upon an endless coast
The enemy's army stretched in front of me.
I caught the ravening eyes of all of these
Within my own like spears upon a shield
And held them till that army seemed to yield
Vanquished, as at the cliff's glance sink the seas.—
Then I looked round for God. And where was he ?

SONNET VII.

"FIGHT ON!"

FIGHT on,—until the noonday sun be dead.
Fight on, until the sun of afternoon
Fade slowly,—till the sun of evening swoon
With blood-shot eyes and smoke-wreaths round his head.
Fight on,—while rises the fierce wrathful red
Disk of the powder-grimed and sword-scarred moon.
Fight on : the army of the stars will soon
Give light. Fight on, when every star has fled.
Fight through the darkness then, with only light
Of all the enemy's eyes to guide the way
Straight to the enemy's heart.—While sword can smite,
While will can still command and arm obey,
Fight on. And, falling, first with wild delight
See the foe stagger, in the death-dawn grey.

SONNET VIII.

THE LONELY GOD-KING.

THE strange relief to God when he at last
Touches the walls of empery supreme !
When no stars glitter through a golden dream,
But God thanks God that he has made the past.
The giant rest to God when through the vast
No more white clouds with wings unearthly gleam :
When no more moons or suns or comets stream
Before his gaze half loving, half aghast.

To touch the walls of his own empire : Rest
Eternal to the heart that moulded all.
To sleep at last within his golden hall,
Lost in repose unfathomed and unguessed :
To cease for ever from his dateless quest,
With heaven's effulgence round him like a wall.

TO THE UNKNOWN FATHER OF JESUS.

A WORD for thee, thou poor forgotten Jew,
Who loving Mary dreamedst not that she
(Thy kiss worked wonders vaster than she knew !)
Would bear the King of all posterity.

Thou left'st within the world its fairest light,
Obscure begetter of the Nazarene,
Whose casual love-act in an Eastern night
Produced the grandest soul the world has seen.

Hail, unknown father, undiscerned bridegroom,
Who, having passed to regions dim and far,
Lost in the ages, buried in time's gloom,
Yet left'st within man's world its loveliest star !

A thousand shrines for her, the undefiled,
By blue Italian lake, Italian sea ;
Wild worship for the mother of the child—
But from men's lying tongues what word for thee ?

What word for thee, without whom none the less
The world had suffered an unmeasured loss ?
The Saviour was the fruit of thy caress :
Without thy love had been nor crown, nor cross,—

No cross, no crown, no Jesus. Not one church
Had reared its sacred sign in any land !
And yet no thinker ever thought to search
For thee,—no dreamer cared to understand.

Thou wast not good, it may be—high nor great :
And yet to thee our greatest owed his breath.
Thou wast the watcher at his birth's bright gate,
As Pilate watched beside his gate of death.

Thee thy son's church has chosen to ignore.

The world, with its false sighs and foolish tears,
Crying, "Mary virgin! Mary we adore!"

Has passed *thee* by for eighteen hundred years.

*

*

And what of fatherhood it cared to ascribe

To Jesus' father, this to God it gave;

Dismissed the thought of thee with jeer and gibe

—Thou wast a dead man deep within the grave!

Thou hast been wronged.—The mighty God of flowers,

Of storms, of sunsets, of the human race;

He whose hand sways all destinies of ours;

He with the unseen ever-present face:

He, herder of the clouds, whose right hand drives

The sun's gold chariot through the gleaming sky;

Lord of our birth and master of our lives;

He at whose word red battle's millions die:

He at whose word the chargers of the waves

Leap snowy-maned upon the trembling shore;

Who in the blue gulf digs the great ships' graves;

He whom the stars in all their shrines adore:

Could he not leave to Mary and to thee

Thy child and hers? Why must the Lord divorce
Father from mother? Why must purity,

Truth, love, all suffer through man's fancies coarse?

The truth is grandest. Years may pass away:

Yet by one night's wild love-kiss thou hast won,

Poor Jew, the right through every age to say,

"I loved the mother. Jesus is my son."

A RUSSIAN WOMAN TO A RUSSIAN NIHILIST.

I LOVE thy red right hand, thy reckless daring :
I love thy patient strength, thy fiery zeal.
If thou wert quite alone, thy doom preparing,
With lonely rapture brain and heart would reel.

The hand that I have kissed with stern grip closes
Upon the dagger, tightening for the strife.
With woman's hand I gather harmless roses,
But thou dost gather with red pruning-knife.

My soul is as a stream : past banks of flowers
It flows. Canst thou, strong sweetheart, care for me ?
My hair is full of scent of woodbine bowers :
Thou art the tidal cruel desperate sea.

Thou art the sea. I am the calm-souled river ;
Calm-souled, yet hurrying onward to my doom.
Farewell, green banks where wind-kissed aspens shiver !
Farewell, wild woods where yellow cowslips bloom !

I bring thee down a flower or two with laughter
From far-off meads which thou wilt never see :
A flower or two which thou shalt wear hereafter,
When I am lost, O lover,—lost in thee !

Thou hast God's very strength of will for dower :
If God were tyrant, God thine hand would slay !
God rules for aye : thou rulest for one hour,
Superb with godhead for a single day.

A woman's love is love for strength exceeding,
For power excessive, for transcendent might :
The river's love for the blue waves unheeding ;
The love of darkness for the golden light.

Old dreams of heaven and God hold out no longer :
Thou art my king, the God whom I adore !
The lord of heaven was strong, but thou art stronger :
In thee I lose myself for evermore.

TO THE CZAR.

O THOU who rulest by the might of legions,
Lord of the snow-robed plains, the ice-bound sea,
Hear thou man's word in far-off sunnier regions
Spoken, the thought of thousands who are free.

Deem'st thou thy millions trampled down for ages
Will never rise in multitudinous scorn ?
God clothes thee in darkness, but no God engages
That darkness shall not change to fiery morn.

Blood cries for blood, and slaughter shrieks for slaughter ;
Man's dagger flashes back thy keen sword's light :
Wrong is the sire, and Murder is the daughter—
She with the crimson hand, and face quite white.

Lo !—with an Emperor's arms to seize and pinion—
A woman * dies beneath the ensanguined rod :
Her cry, though stifled, rings through thy dominion,—
Ay ! past thy sky's cold starlight, up to God.

Not only up to God ;—man's soul has shivered
With horror, hearing this accursèd thing :
A woman's cry, as 'neath the lash she quivered
King-smitten, becomes the death-knell of a king.

Her cry is cry of triumph for the nations,
For worn-out dynasties the trump of doom.
It shall be heard by hearts of generations ;
Our women hear it from the Northland's gloom.

* See note B, at end of volume.

Here, where we have nought to do but wait and listen
Till Liberty speaks fully from her throne,
'Tis well to call to mind, while Spring's eyes glisten,
That still in one land Winter holds its own ;

To call to mind that one, well born and cherished
By many a friend ere this grim deed was done,
At the flail's hundredth blood-stroke sank and perished
Where Russia's dim vaults still defy the sun.

And thou, whom darkness' sable wide wings sheltering
Still shield from sword-thrust of the avenging light,
Think'st thou that corpses in thy blind gaols weltering
Can stain the flags, yet sully not the night ?

Construct thy walls of sound-proof stern ingredients !—
Erect thy prisons in thy deserts lone !—
Blood oozes out, for all thy royal expedients,
And trickles Westward from thine hells of stone.

The shrieks of thousands doubtless have been stifled :
Thine iron-barred dungeons drip with tongueless gore :
While gold-crowned dynasties have mocked or trifled,
Man's blood has rippled on a voiceless shore.

That strange Siberian snow-path, full of terror,
Along whose dismal track the doomed feet go—
Thousands, through royal crime or royal error,
Have crimsoned with their blood the silent snow.

Their suffering all seems wasted—wasted wholly
Their age-long fierce defiance of the Czars :
Still o'er that path the hapless troop winds slowly,
And still the snow turns red beneath the stars.

A hundred years have passed since, skyward flaming,
The black French fortress owned man's conquest wrought ;
Confessed its hellish sins, its crimes past naming,—
Born of kings' fancies, perished at man's thought.

How many years will slower pass—not, surely,
Another century—ere, gaunt wall by wall,
Will flame to heaven the fort that holds securely
Liberty bound—the prison of Peter-Paul ?

Or—better still—if thou, whose life is terror
To thine own self, wouldst ere that stormy hour
Fling wide the gates thy fathers closed in error
And mix with reason's dreams thy dreams of power !

What is thy life but anguish now ? —immuring
Thyself behind Gatschina's massy gates,
'Spite of ten thousand bribeless bolts securing,
Thou shiverest if one rusty hinge but grates.

Chief of a hundred millions, king-commander
Of armies cumbering space with lance and plume,
Thou art thyself imprisoned, Alexander,—
Lord of the earth, yet penned within a room !

The humblest child within thy vast dominions,
Watching the free-winged swallow on the breeze
Or the glad butterfly's untrammelled pinions,
Is happier than the lord of lands and seas.

The serf within his cottage calmly slumbers ;
He knows that, when he wakes, all will be well :
But thou, whose guards are unimagined numbers,
Art at the mercy of one fuse from hell.

Summer brings nought of change ; in every season
Sedition's threats allow thee no repose ;—
May's flower-sweet air is rank with deadliest treason ;
Danger may lurk within the scented rose :

The morning sun may guide the assassin's dagger ;
Aim may be trustier underneath the moon ;
Thou, watching the clear skies, mayest backward stagger
Struck dead beneath the stars of fragrant June !

Sole despot-ruler of a mighty nation,
Yet art thou but the shadow of a king :
Thou startest at a green leaf's palpitation,
As the earth quakes at thy black eagle's wing.

Lifting the gold cup to thy lips thou tremblest :
Pause—what if subtlest poison should be there ?
In face of friends and foemen thou dissemblest ;
Long terror changed to white thine Empress' hair.

Within the holiest church the bomb exploding,
With splinters full of fiery tongues may cry,
“Remember prisoners in damp cells corroding ;
Remember Bernstein * choked to death—and die !”

The knife may flash forth from the embroidered curtain :
Thou, shuddering as thou seest the cold steel shine,
Mayest hear a voice that thunders, “Czar, be certain
That Zotoff's † bloodless veins must drink at thine !”

Within the night pale countless ghosts surround thee :
“Why tarry thus on earth ?” their tongues exclaim ;
“Already as lord of hell our hands have crowned thee,
Czar of the dungeons lit by ceaseless flame.

* See note C, at end of volume.

† See note C.

“ Priest of the torments in the realms infernal,
Prince of the unmeasured leagues of sunless gloom,
Pass thou from earth—thine empire is eternal
Within the shades, thou Cæsar of the tomb !”

*

*

These hearest thou, these seest thou, dimly or brightly,
By day, by night, thou saddest living heart :
Wilt thou not rise—do one deed noble, knightly—
Ere Fate, who slew thy father, says, “ Depart !”

SONNET.

HEART-ACHE.

I THINK of you, my loved one, and I wonder,
I wonder whether you ever think of me
And send a glance across the seas that sunder,
The seas of space that sunder me from thee?
We parted last in darkness and in rain :
When shall I see you next, my queen, and where?
In August moonlight shall we meet again,
Or when September's storm-blast thrills the air?—
One summer's sweetness! Then my life concludes?
Will every summer now that is to be
Lack somewhat of love's splendour in the woods,
Miss somewhat of love's light upon the sea?
"Despair" the waves will murmur as they break,
And, darling, how my lonely heart will ache!

POETRY AND SCIENCE.*

Not all the suns that throng the soundless spaces
Are worth the radiance of one loving heart :
The least and humblest of all human faces
Hath nobler import in the eyes of Art.

Gaze through your glass till ye be stricken with blindness !
Peer at the heavens whose bright star-clusters gleam !
One human heart that glows with loving-kindness
Outshines the stars, and makes your heavens a dream.

Fair Science trumpets her own praise so loudly
She fails to catch creation's under-tune ;
But listening Art, who walks the earth less proudly,
Can hear—while Science quarries in the moon.

What is it worth to know the leagues that sever
Our green-grassed earth from Sirius or from Mars ?
The skies are lampless wastes, if we for ever
Must cease to tell our fortunes by the stars !

If darkness' doors were sundered, and we knew them,
Gold star by star deploying from the deep,—
If we could muster and rank by rank review them,
Would it be worth one gift of white-armed Sleep ?

Would it be worth the gifts that passion brings us,
Or love, who makes the universe so grand ?
Not all the gifts cold haughty Science flings us
Are worth the warm touch of one loving hand.

* This poem is reprinted from the *Universal Review* by the kind permission of the Editor.

Love ruled the past, and love will rule the ages
Unseen, unknown, the summers yet to be :
In spite of Science' wand the storm-wind rages,
But Venus' touch wrought magic on the sea.

What is it to us to know that phraseless distance
Prevails in space, and dateless years in time ?
Without the groping telescope's assistance
The soul of man can worship the sublime :

We need not Science' barge, slow-sailed and lumbering,
To bear us o'er the ocean of the past ;
It is enough to know that earth, long slumbering,
At love's touch woke to passionate life at last.

What is it to us to know that giant Saturn,
Vaunting his 'scutcheon with the triple bars,
Wears still a fiery robe of doubtful pattern,
All uncomplete among the elder stars ?

What is it to us to know that kindred metals
Within our earth and in the planets rest ?
Why pause to analyse the flame that settles
Triumphant on the light-god's glittering crest ?

I'd surely choose, had I the choice, to follow,
When morning thrills the dazzled air with pride,
Along heaven's heights the footsteps of Apollo
Rather than Proctor's, though his path be wide.

Of Grimm and Andersen no heart could weary ;
We turned to another when each tale was done :
But now we yawn, and feel that earth grows dreary,
While Norman Lockyer lectures on the sun.

Give me the days of faith, and not of Science !
Give me the days of faith in unseen things !
The days of self-doubt, not of self-reliance :
Days when the rainbow flashed from fairy wings.

The elves retreat, when Science onward marches.
Their banners disappear, no bright robes gleam
With sudden splendour through the forest-arches :
Titania rides not on the pale moon-beam.

Knowledge hath little worth, if dreams are going.
Let me watch in the stream the Naiad's hair ;
Or wander forth when balmy winds are blowing
Through sunlit groves, and find sweet Daphne there.

To know is well, but not to know is better.
'Tis ignorance that makes the child sublime.
To learn new facts adds fetter unto fetter
For all the already weary sons of time.

We count the stars,—yet dream not what we are losing,
Ay, losing all of us, the whole wise race,
In that no more among the reed-beds musing
Shall we see Pan's half-human wrinkled face.

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If scientists must work a revolution
And upset all we used to hold most dear,
Well, let them speak—the Royal Institution
Is open—not a soul need go to hear.

In fog-land let them reign, but let them leave us
Sweet green-haired Dryads safe in every tree ;
Leave us the ghosts—no matter if these deceive us !—
And leave ten thousand mermaids in the sea.



If Comte and Strauss must preach their wild vagaries,
Why, let them preach—but not to poets' ears!
Poets would rather help the wildwood fairies
To drill the mice to stalwart grenadiers:

Then watch them, with a pink-eyed rat for sergeant,
March past the carriage of the Fairy Queen;
Their long tails trailing on the river margent,
Their bayonets flashing through the rushes green.

Poets would rather, when the mountains rumble,
Believe that gnomes are cannonading there,
Than that mere fragments of waste granite crumble,
Or that the levin rives the sultry air.

The poet on his magic sword reliant,
Wildly enamoured of some captive's charms,
Longs to encounter the vast-shouldered giant
And rescue trembling virtue from his arms.

He longs for the old days, superb, red-lettered,
When knights might count on finding 'mid the trees
Some noble maiden to a stout trunk fettered,
Robed in her hair (and shivering in the breeze).

He loves the blue sky that the white clouds mottle:
Now any beardless scientist may brag
That Tyndall made some blue sky in a bottle,
And closed the empyrean in his bag.

God, when he shut heaven's door, took care to lock it,
Glanced round, then set to work upon the sun;
But Spencer drew his latch-key from his pocket,
And entered heaven, and saw the whole thing done.

Hence all our thoughts are changed—a light intenser
Now beams upon the paths creation took.
Had Moses had the help of Herbert Spencer,
He would have written a far abler book.

And yet I have a feeling, stronger growing,
That Moses' old-world view was grander far,
Though, one admits, he had no means of knowing
The laws that govern even a single star :

For Moses thought the stars' eternal story
Told of a living God's majestic might ;
But Spencer thinks the stars show forth *his* glory,
Blazoning his name in gold upon the night.

If most of Genesis be hopeless fiction,
Yet hath that fiction more poetic worth
(This one may say, defying contradiction)
Than any scientific "truth" on earth.

'Tis more romantic to believe that Adam
Dropped into Eden from the starry blue,
Then lent a rib to God to lend to Madam,
Than to re-visit our parents at the "Zoo."

'Tis more poetic to believe that heaven
Awaits us round the corner when we die,
Than to believe that no more soul is given
To man than to the grunTERS in the styE.

'Tis better to believe that sin and apples
Got somehow mixed in mankind's early days,
Than to possess a mind that proudly grapples
With protoplasm's dim mysterious ways.

'Æsop was great. That marvellous narrator
Made donkeys talk (since then they never cease !)
But in these days we need one even greater ;
One who can make the donkeys hold their peace.

OLD LETTERS.

I.

LETTERS mixed in strangest wild communion—

Was there ever such a wondrous heap ?
There they lie, diverse, in seeming union :
Some in faded brown ink, some in deep.

Such a strange assortment ! There, collected
Through the ups and downs of twenty years,
See them lying helpless,—disconnected
From the old joys that filled them and the fears.

Disconnected are they now for ever
From the hopes and fears of early days.
They will speak their ancient language never.
Can November sing one song of May's ?

Can the winter with the spring hold parley ?
Can the wild red poppies as they gleam,
Flashing through the wheat and tufted barley,
Ever of the frozen furrows dream ?

No : to-day must face to-day's own troubles.
Of the old sorrows, some have past away :
Hopes have melted into air like bubbles ;
Golden dreams have darkened into grey.

Ah ! the twenty years, the myriad letters—
Some that pierced my very soul with pain :
Some that bound my heart in loving fetters
(Would that we could wear those bonds again !)

—Some from India, yet with memories in them
Of the dear old Isis' grassy banks !

If I once unfasten and begin them,
Ghostly thoughts will rise in endless ranks ;

Thoughts of Oxford, of young days sun-lighted,
Of the swift boats racing past the shore ;

Thoughts of early vows of friendship plighted :
Sounds will echo as of wave and oar.

If I open—Shall I open any ?

Dreams are sometimes very sweet indeed,
Yet they weaken, when too sweet, too many ;
Undermine the present strength we need.

II.

Letters some there are in boyish seasons
Written, when the unfeverish hours were fair ;
Long ere passion's tenderness and treasons
Filled the skies of life with burning air.

Letters written in the days of rapture,
Days of merry gladness all unfeigned ;
Days when very heaven it was to capture
Perch or roach, or whiting rosy-stained.

Days when butterflies before us flaming
Charmed us as with flash of fairy light,
Robed in magic hues past mortal naming,
Lustrous yellow, crimson, snowiest white.

* * *

Some from those who passed through life believing
That the spirits of the dead were near,—
Deemed that they for ever were receiving
Messages from those who once were dear.

As I read their letters, half I sorrow,
Half I smile—to them their faith was grand :
Sunlight lacking here they sought to borrow
From the summers of an unseen land.

Strong their faith was, fierce and energetic.
If in fact they saw no ghostly friend,
That but makes their life's dream more pathetic,
And with them it lasted till the end.

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Letters some there are that breathe of passion.
How their value lessens with the years !
Now we estimate in sober fashion
Sighs and kisses, burning words and tears.

Passion doubtless had its truths to teach us :
Sent from heaven, it teaches every one.
Passion dies—we think no light can reach us—
Yet God overtakes us with the sun.

Stars and sun again for us are shining ;
All our sorrow darkens not the sea :
“ Mortal,” God saith, “ while thou wast repining,
See what treasures I kept back for thee !

“ While thou dreamedst that the world was over,
Starlight, sunlight, storm and cloud and rain,
Golden waving corn and crimson clover,
All these came again and yet again.

“ Though thy sullen vision thou wast sealing,
On the hedges miles of may were white :
Through the silent darkness slowly stealing
Came the moon, and silvered all the night.

"Let thy dream of passion fade behind thee
 Like the tossing vapours seaward blown !
 Let my comfort breathed through nature find thee :
 While God liveth, thou art not alone."

III.

Strange to think that all these hearts' outpouring
 Will so soon be ashes . . . if I burn !
 Thoughts that sought the blue sky wild and soaring :
 Love that made the answering spirit yearn.

If I cast old letters in the ocean,
 Trust them to the boundless waves to keep,
 Will the waters thrill to man's emotion?
 Can I trust my treasures to the deep?

If I fling them forth amid the clover
 Or the fields where countless daisies grow,
 Will the skylark care to con them over ?
 Will the clouded yellow care to know ?

Here are letters full of love and tender,
 Love that made life's morning like a dream—
 Shall I cast them 'mid the golden splendour
 Of the buttercups beside the stream ?

Oft I think that sacred letters breathing
 Love of mother, sweetheart, trusty friend,
 Never ought to feel the hot flames wreathing
 Round them, ought to find a nobler end.

Then I take the letters and I tear them
 Sadly, gently, tearfully maybe,
 And I let the loving west wind bear them,
 Little white-sailed fragments, out to sea !

Or I cast them on the eddy river,
Watch them floating downward, one by one.
Some to starlight, trusting, I deliver :
Some I give to morning and the sun.

But I never can destroy quite tearless
What has cost the writers love and pain.
Letters of expostulation fearless,
Through my soul your accents ring again !

Letters some of love most sweet and simple
(These I'll keep for ever, close to me !)—
Not a fragment torn of these shall dimple
Softest bosom of the sunniest sea.

Even the buttercups shall never carry
Fragments to their sister-flowers to read
Not one word of these shall ever tarry,
Adding sweetness to the scented mead.

While I tear—and sometimes not with sorrow—
Here a poet's, there a thinker's words,
These shall dwell with me for many a morrow,
Sweet and simple as the notes of birds.

Lo, this canon to the waves I scatter !
Burn this maundering prelate in his pride !
Rend this preacher's homily—small matter !
Love is far too rare to fling aside.

IV.

But alas ! some writers' souls have floated
Farther than the letter-fragments sail.
Noble spirits, faithful and devoted,
Where are ye ? Man's wondering thought turns pale.

Farther than the stars that watch me read them
 Have the writers of some letters sped :
 Angel hearts, it may be, love and heed them,
 But for us they rank among the dead.

Past the goals of mortal joy and anguish,
 Past our winters of the barren bough,
 Hours of storm or summer days that languish,
 Past all change of seasons are they now.

Some whose power had vanished of discerning
 God behind his veil of purple air,
 God behind his sunset-raiment burning,
 God beyond the flowers he makes so fair,—

These have travelled into viewless regions :
 Now, perhaps, God face to face they see,
 Find the deathland holds its living legions,
 Find how crowded is eternity.

Much they suffered, these, while life enchained them.
 God, perhaps, whom they disdained to own,
 Generous more than they, has not disdained them,
 Given an audience unto each alone.

Others who in the sweet older fashion
 Trusted Jesus, and who trusting went,
 Has not God been equal to their passion ?
 Have they not found blessing and content ?

Even if their Master was not ready,
 He himself, to change the storm to calm,
 Has not God compelled each whirling eddy,
 Poised death's ocean in his hollow palm ?

Even if their Master would not waken
While the vessel staggered through the gloom,
Has not God with hand and heart unshaken
Steered each vessel past the shoals of doom?

Has not God in whom their hearts found pleasure,
Though they called him by another name,
Said to each with love no words may measure,
“Heaven was very lonely till you came!”

Has not God to these who loved him solely—
So they thought—in Jesus, through his grace,
Now revealed himself superbly, wholly,
Saying, “Behold his Father face to face!”

As I read their loving simple letters
Oft I feel that though their creed was grim
They have grown to-day beyond its fetters,
Each has found God looking out for him.

Each has found that if the soul beseech him
Truly, in the tongue of any land,
Ever will its urgent crying reach him,
Ever will he stoop and understand.

v.

But—a sadder thought—some souls have wandered,
Though among the living yet they be,
Farther than the letter-fragments squandered
On the billows roaring in from sea.

Farther than the dead souls (love can perish
Never, though the loving hearts be dumb)—
Souls whom once our own souls loved to cherish,
Whom we think of when the roses bloom :

Whom we think of when the roses lavish
 Scented flying petals on the gale :
 Think of when the autumn wild winds ravish
 Crimson leaves that down the eddies sail.

Farther than all thought or recollection
 Even—for their minds have grown apart :
 Death can bring deep sorrow and dejection,
 But it never quite dismays the heart.

This dismays—that some are near us living,
 Close beside our threshold it may be,
 Whom we loved with all our power of giving,
 Yet between us rolls a bridgeless sea !

Friends whose souls from ours the swift years sever,
 Friends whose love is lost in starless gloom,
 These indeed are lost to us for ever,
 Buried deeper than in any tomb.

SONNET.

TO ERNEST BIRCH.

O THOU who through high Music's golden gate
Hast right of entrance to the land divine
Wherein the poets' crowns and sceptres shine,
Thy coming we, Song's warders, celebrate.
Thou art a poet-soul beyond debate :—
Thy music thunders out like Milton's line :
Thou canst describe in music and design ;
Thy music sighs forth love, or volleys hate.

Poems are silent till thou layest thine hand
Upon their chords. Lo ! then the poems speak,
And utter all their souls in music rare.—
Thou dost interpret poets to their land,
Adding the music-charm they vainly seek,—
Making the fairest poem yet more fair.

Feb. 23, 1887.

TO SEPTEMBER.

I LOVE the soft September days.—
When summer's ardent life is done,
I love to see the red leaves fall
And know that death is lord of all ;
Lord of the green-grassed flowery ways,
Lord even of the sun.

As Wordsworth loved and worshipped May,
I love the calm autumnal time.
The gift most needed at the close
Of this sad century is repose :
Rapture was for a former day
And for another's rhyme.

As bright May cheers the buoyant soul
And fills the glad with gladder thought,
So thou, September, cheer'st my heart ;
For in this world all joys depart,
And endless effort wins no goal
And labour counts for nought.

I love thee, pale September, well.
The summer flaunted flower on flower
And filled the hedges with its bloom,
But thou, September, bringest gloom,
And gloom is heaven and light is hell
In this the world's dark hour

When Wordsworth sang his song to May,
The world had hardly learnt to doubt—
God smiled from heaven: he loved us all:
Without his will no leaf could fall :
But in this later darker day
Despair has found us out.

We realize that we may be,
We human sufferers, quite alone :
Created by no conscious will,
Doomed to live on and suffer still,
Without a heavenly eye to see
Or ear to hear us groan.

We realize that star on star
May mock us from the depths of space,
But that in star or moon or sun
There may be none to aid us, none :
In regions near or regions far
No voice, no human face.

We deem perhaps that human life
Alone in our star buds and flowers,
Here having been evolved alone :
No whispers on the night-winds blown
Bring messages of love or strife
From other worlds than ours.

But Wordsworth in that happier day
Knew not that ere his century's close
Dark doubt so deadly would arise.
He watched the heavens with tranquil eyes,
And sang his loving song to May
And to the summer's rose.

Ah ! dark September suits us best.
It meets our humour to behold
The bright hues fade on flower and leaf :
God knows we are most at home with grief,
And in despair are most at rest !
We and the age are old.

So, sad September, I love thee :
The lessening sunshine on the rills,
The winds that toss the shuddering leaves,
The wind-swept withered sedge that grieves,
The chillier sunlight on the sea
And on the darkening hills.

AN EASTERN YEARNING.

OH be thou just a rose ! Why thou canst kiss,
And is not that enough ? If more be given,
Something is stolen from swift passion's bliss :
If there be "mind," there must be less of heaven.

Soul, culture, intellect—What gifts are these ?
If woman win them, why should man adore ?
Is there much "culture" in the summer breeze,
Or "mind" in ripples laughing on the shore ?

Woman is part of Nature. She was born
From the bright sea-wave. She and flowers are one.
Can your cold Western culture e'er adorn
Her who is taught by sea-waves and the sun ?

Oh, God deliver me from Western dreams !
Give me warm moonlight on an Arab tent :
Within, the touch that thrills, the glance that gleams ;
Soft bosom o'er me through the darkness bent.

Then am I saved and crowned,—for bliss is there,
And perfect bliss is heaven. Whate'er men say,
I hold that God set stars within the air
That mouth to mouth might find a readier way !

Is *this* ignoble ? More than sky or flower
To love the glory of a woman's grace :
To win eternal rapture in an hour,
Life at her lips, and heaven in her embrace ?

Ever to find fresh shapely wonders shown
 (And beauty has unmeasured power to bless !)—
Ever to come on some grand curve unknown,
 Some line of more than mortal loveliness ?

To feel—as ever it is deepliest felt
 At midmost thrilling of the close warm kiss—
The sense of form throughout one's being melt,
 The sculptor's mingled with the lover's bliss ?

I hold that God made flowers that man might know
 That woman's beauty is a lovelier joy.
Breathe wisdom on the petals—Down they go !
 Woman becomes an intellectual toy.

Here in the West sweet womanhood is dead.
 Woman is master : mankind is the slave.
Awestruck, the trembling spouse draws near her bed
 And claims the rights her condescension gave.

But she is master, ruler of the West :
 The days of fragrant love have all gone by.
Ah me, the olden days were far the best !
 There were more stars I think, then, in the sky.

There was more tenderness in woman's heart,
 Less cursèd Greek and Hebrew in her brain !
Then all she knew (enough to know) of Art
 Was just the art man's passionate love to gain.

Those happier days are over. On the whole
 I'll start for lovelier lands and bluer seas !
Beauty I'll find : I leave you woman's soul—
 I like her best without it, if you please.

GOD'S SERMON.

I.

"ART not thou contented, mortal?"

Sometimes so God seems to say:

"Must I bear thee through death's portal?

Wouldst thou live beyond thy day?

Why shouldst thou aspire to be

Sentient through eternity?

"Life and tender love I sent thee,

Sunny dawns and silent eves;

Stars and moon and sun I lent thee,

Ruby flowers and emerald leaves;

Splendour of the sapphire main:

Yet thou cravest to live again!

"Foolish art thou, foolish surely,

Clamouring for a joyless boon.

If the heaven that shines so purely

Now with golden stars and moon

Shone for ever thus the same,

Nought it would be but a name.

"Thou in time wouldst grow quite weary

Of the sights that seem so fair;

Even the sunlight would be dreary,

Sweet lips not what once they were;

Much have I the power to give,

Not the power to bid thee live.

"Thou art part of all that changes,
 I myself am changeful too :
 Through new spheres my being ranges ;
 Other work I have to do
 Than to keep a moth like thee
 Plumaged through eternity.

"Life I gave thee for a season,
 Friendship's pleasure, passion's kiss ;
 Heart to love and brain to reason,
 Many a month of sunny bliss ;
 But my last gift is my best—
 Peace from living, perfect rest."

II.

"Once thou seest the sun, once only,—
 Nothing twice is quite the same :
 Life's supremest joys are lonely,
 Like the God from whom they came.
 Only once a kiss is sweet ;
 Once as one the wild hearts beat.

"If in heaven thou took'st thy pleasure
 Through a course of endless hours,
 Thinkest thou that thou wouldst treasure
 As thou dost the wayside flowers ?
 No : its coming death bestows
 All its lustre on the rose.

"Deepest sinks the first impression :
 Even the form thou lovest best
 Passed into thy full possession
 On the night it was possest.
 Woman, blossom, sunset, sea,
 Give their beauty once to thee.

“Craving heaven, thou cravest sadness.

I myself would sometimes give
All I know of heavenly gladness
For the simple right to live
On thine earth for fifty years,
Sharing human joys and tears.

“Woman’s beauty I, her Maker,

Only in a measure see :
But thou art the full partaker,
Her whole self she gives to thee.
I, who first created this,
Half am envious of her kiss.

“Though his joy but for one minute

Lasteth, yet the mortal gains,
For there’s more of rapture in it
Than eternity contains !
Take thy moment’s bliss—then die
Happier after all than I.”

FATE'S EQUAL MEASURE.

WE need not envy fern and daisy,
Nor summer's wealth of bloom :
October's days come, dark and hazy,
And clothed about with gloom.

We need not envy summer's roses :
The bleak autumnal wind
Sweeps through the frightened shuddering closes
And leaves no flowers behind.

No lives we see are worth our longing :
Through every golden dream
The pallid morning thoughts come thronging
In one long ghostly stream.

Some seem to win one happy season :
But envy not their fate !
Sorrow and blank dismay and treason
Upon their threshold wait.

Are lovers happy ? Not for ever
The clinging kiss shall last.
A thousand foemen wait to sever :
One rapture—then 'tis past !

The blue sea turns to storm and madness ;
The still lake boils with foam :
Spent is the green-leafed summer's gladness ;
Afar the red leaves roam !

THE SONG OF MANHOOD.

So envy no man.—Happiest lovers
Have death beside their feet.
Lo ! what a strange flower-raiment covers
The supple snake's retreat.

At least in this an equal measure
Fate's grim unbribed hand deals,
Bestowing pain, and stealing pleasure
From every heart that feels.

MORAL COMPLEXITY.

A LOVER conquered passion, and he let
The great sweet chance slip through his fingers quite.
But was he closer unto God,
He who with swift feet should have trod
The fragrant paths of passionate love that night?
Was there no storm of anguish and regret?

All through that night he tossed about, in dreams
Seeing a rose ungathered beckoning him :
Seeing the sudden flash of white
That gleams upon a lover's sight
Above the bodice-lacework's loosened rim :
Waking, and grasping just the cold moonbeams.

All through that night he wrestled as with grim
Despair. He never loved her quite so much :
Ne'er in her eyes he gazed so deep
As that night through his broken sleep,
And thrice he started wakeful at her touch.
The morning broke, rainy and weird and dim.

Then forth he went and wandered by the sea.
The horizon cleared, and the fair golden sun
Flashed out upon the answering waves ;
They seemed like leagues of mocking graves ;
The battle he the previous night had won
Seemed like a fierce defeat—such beings are we !

"One hour for love, one hour for passion, friend !"

So said the waves that leaped upon the shore :

"One hour of limitless delight,

One marvellous hour—and then the night

That steals the sun whose splendour we adore ;

Dost thou not know the tenderest hour must end ?"

Next, turning inland, many a wet rose-tree

Flung rainbow-dewdrops at him as in scorn.

"Lo ! what a glory thou hast missed :

Thou mightst have been so softly kissed,

As we were kissed by the sun's lips at morn."

So said the blossoms, just as said the sea.

"And she," he thought—"my rose-bush all this night

Of perfect passionate summer left alone !

No kiss for lovely lips or breast ;

No amorous waking after rest ;

Ah me ! she might have been my own...my own...

My darling till the coming of the light.

"To-night is left us still : the ways untrod

Shall ring to-night to passion's steeds, by heaven !

No more the blossoms and the sea

Shall fling their mocking gibes at me :

To-night love's sweetest gifts shall all be given ;

To-night I'll take this boon, as from some God !"

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And that night, having sent a letter first,

He waited her beside the blue still sea.

The summer ripples at his feet

Sang, "This is right, for this is sweet !"

The stars gazed down upon him tenderly.

Now he was ready—let Fate do its worst.

Now he felt oneness with the passionate rose,
For Nature worships joy and nought beside.
No self-denial Nature needs ;
She ranks our good with evil deeds ;
There is no conscience in the ocean wide,
And no sin troubles the blue sky's repose.

The starlight shines to bless a sinful pair ;
The moon will give her blessing to the base :
The odours of the summer night
Float round about wild lovers' flight :—
So this man, dreaming of a woman's grace,
Felt unknown sweetness in the soft night-air.

He felt a calm like heaven's own peace indeed,
For strange peace visits all in their own sphere.
God's angel never quite departs
But finds a way to all our hearts,
And in some mode makes every mortal hear.
To last night's storm he felt repose succeed.

Then passion grasped his throat with giant strength.
“ Years have I waited, but to-night, to-night,
The golden stars in all the sky
Shall pause and watch the old longing die,
Dead of an unknown joy, a new delight,
And peace shall dwell within my soul at length ! ”

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He turned to meet her, for the hour had come.
Then lo ! a carriage by the seaside wall,
And into his her eyes once flashed
Then on towards Rome the horses dashed.
He saw it now,—Last night or never at all :—
Ay—never, never, never !—till the tomb.

FOUR SONNETS.

THE TWO PROPHETS.

I.

BOLD was the man who ventured to declare
 " There is no death ! "—when every day which fled
 Murmured, " I carry with me hosts of dead
And pour their souls forth on the soulless air : "
When every sunrise whispered of despair,
 Saying, " Ere to-night thou also mayest be led
 Along the path thy parents had to tread,
Who heard no voice, nor saw the sunlight there."

Bold was the man who ventured in the face
 Of the clear certainty that all things die
 To announce an endless life beyond death's gloom :
To cry, " There is a God of love and grace ;
 There is for each an immortality ;
 'There is a power that can unseal the tomb."

II.

But bolder is the spirit who at this hour
 After so many centuries would revive
 Despair, to man proclaiming " Thou shalt live
For this life only, like the grass or flower.
Hope, young imagination's fairy dower,
 Has passed away for ever ! Toil and strive
 And love. But one reward the fates can give :
Silence. The rest lies far beyond their power."

Bold is the spirit who at this century's close
 Proclaims : " The star that lighted mankind once
 Now trembling towards the godless dark is driven
Save in man's dreams your Master never rose ;
 The time has come for ever to renounce
 All faith in God, and every hope of heaven "

THE GREAT CHANGE.

OF old the singers spake of loving ways
 Of God towards man, of wondrous mercies shown :
 God was the Giver of all things—man alone
 Received, and homage of high love and praise
 Was due to God,—altars mankind must raise ;
 With gladness shout or for transgressions moan.—
 How changed to-day is mankind's general tone !
 God seems to us the sinner in these days.
 Of old, it seemed, the heavenly eye pursued
 Sinners who fled from it beyond the light,
 Cowered in the darkness, trembled at the sun.
 Now man demands of God : “ But art *thou* good ?
 Hast thou, Lord God, in every point done right ?
 Hast thou loved justice ? Yea, what hast *thou* done ? ”

MERCY AND JUSTICE.

“ MERCY, good Lord,” the sea-beach preachers pray :
 “ Mercy for sinful man ; for he deserves
 His doom, and thy great justice never swerves,—
 Mercy for man in thy grim judgment-day ! ”
 So they exclaim,—beside the sea-waves grey
 O'er which that unconverted sea-gull curves.
 And some with craven hearts and cowardly nerves
 Bend to the lurid God their words portray.
 But I—I stand secluded and apart,
 And mix my spirit with the sea's great heart,
 And with the voice, as it were, of all the sea
 I cry : “ Not mercy,—justice, we require ;
 Be thou true-souled, O God,—and be no liar ;
 Lo ! that much sorrowing man demands from thee.”
Sept. 6, 1882.

THIS TIME LAST YEAR.

LINES WRITTEN IN MEMORY OF PHILIP BOURKE
MARSTON.

THIS time last year, the sun and stars and sea,
Which thou seeing not didst love, saw and loved thee ;
The world thou couldst not see beheld thee, friend :

We saw the sightless eyes that saw no light,—
To whom bright midday was eternal night,
And moonlit clear skies moonless to the end.

All things that heard thy song, rejoiced to hear ;
Thy singing made our dreary world less drear ;
Thou through thy darkness led'st us to the light :

And yet that light thou sawest not. Even the sea
That spake so many a wondrous word to thee
Was never blue, the white rose was not white,

The storm-cloud was not dark, the sky not fair,
Nor golden-bright the flame-filled sunset air
For thee, save only through thy sightless dream :

Thou sawest not aught. Yet all things saw thee, friend ;
The stars and blossoms loved thee to the end ;
The blue sea loved thee, and the silver stream.

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And now, perchance—we know not—it may be—
Thou dost behold in turn our poor blind sea
That fails to apprehend thee where thou art :

'Tis we who are blind to-day,—yes, every one.
Blind are our stars, our moonbeams, and our sun ;
Blind are our daisies with the golden heart.

We cannot see thee. We are left in turn
With loving souls and sightless eyes that yearn
Towards that far land wherein thy foot has trod ;

Not yet can we behold what thou hast seen ;
Thou seest us, it may be ; perhaps dost lean
Above our struggles like a helpful god.

We know not. All is darkness where thou art.
And yet, O poet with the true deep heart,
Darkness to us may be strange light to thee ;

Thou who wast blind on earth mayest now behold
Heaven's sky from east to west aflame with gold,
Immortal morning on a deathless sea.

July 23, 1887.

SATAN ON THE CRUCIFIXION.

I.

I STRUCK too soon. Had I reserved
For later days the stroke that slew,
From the straight path he must have swerved:
Alas ! my own hand crowned the Jew.

With my own hand I crowned him lord
Of eighteen centuries, this at least—
And sent him forth to be adored
By child and woman, king and priest.

I saved him,—I the spirit whose hate
Acting through Pontius hurled him down.
His death became the very gate
Of life, the thorns became a crown.

If I had had the strength to wait,
The man who died at thirty-three
Perhaps had died at eighty-eight
Uncrowned, and unreluctantly.

Time would have moulded all things well
And woman carried out my plan
—The queen who changes heaven to hell,
— And slays the god-like in a man.

Yes : I was over-swift. I wrought,
I toiled his earthly life to mar ;
And yet—a little further thought—
All might have turned out better far !

It was not well to slay the boy
While yet his dream of love held true ;
His dream of an immortal joy
Beyond the heaven of sunlit blue.

In but another ten years' time
The world so different would have seemed !
His Father's method less sublime :
He would not all his life have dreamed.

His power of love had faded out
With cares the long years would have brought :
Heaven is the dream of youth no doubt,
It cannot brook maturer thought.

For with the increasing years all power
Must ever lessen ; love grows less :
Friendship abides but for an hour,
And passion loses loveliness.

The flowers lose fragrance. Though the air
Be starlit, can blind eyes behold ?
Though woman still is very fair,
What are her sweet lips to the old ?

Jesus at fifty ! Had he lived
To fifty, not one fragment then
Of his young teaching had survived,
Or wrought upon the world of men !

II.

And yet it was not all in vain.
More wrong, perhaps, has been achieved,
The man has given the world more pain,
Than if the world had not believed !

Within the living world to-day
There is more hatred, more despair,
Than if I had let old age's grey
Tinge the thinned locks of Jesus' hair.

The eighteen centuries have beheld
More human beings hated, cursed,
Than if strong Reason had dispelled
The mists of Fancy at the first.

For hatred is the very life,
The essence, of the Christian creed.
It feeds on hate, it grows through strife :
Through lies alone it can succeed.

To make the mother hate the son,
To make old friendships fail at last,
This was the goal I would have won.
Did I not win? Regard the past.

Ay, never pagans hated quite
With such intensity as these
Who look to Jesus as their Light
And sink before him on their knees.

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There was no virtue save in him,
There was no goodness save the Jew's ;
Without him even the stars were dim ;
This was his Gospel's great good news.

No marriage tie was pure and sweet
Unless their Lord had blessed it first.
Young lovers fell before his feet :
The old bright smiling gods they cursed.

As if ten thousand noble hearts
 Had not loved well before he came !
As if the world had not been Art's
 Ages before his mother's shame !

As if no mother loved her child
 Until his Church was there to bless !
As if man were till then defiled
 By sight of woman's loveliness !

As if the world so fair, so young,
 Were hideous till therein he trod !
The world where grey old Homer sung ;
 The world where thousands trusted God.

III.

But now the world is growing old :
 It wins the power to understand
That Chance alone can shape and mould,
 Without a conscious Maker's hand.

The world has grown, and now it knows
 That though youth basks in fairy light
The sweet light darkens as one grows,
 And lessens ever till the night.

It knows what Jesus would have known,
 Or known at least in some degree,
Had he survived—had he outgrown
 His young superb credulity.

It feels what Jesus would have felt
 Had years revealed creation's plan,
And to his sanguine nature dealt
 The blow they deal to every man.

It feels—whatever else may fail—
That evil still is root and part
Of life. The mountain needs the vale :
The noble needs the sinful heart.

The true wife needs the harlot's face
That her pure beauty may be seen :
She needs the sinner's fiendish grace
To emphasize her saintly mien.

Remove the sin—the good goes too.
Yes : carry out your Saviour's plan
And you will make the world quite new,
But—change it into hell for man !

The world, were it redeemed from sin
And made your fair dream's counterpart,
Would be just what the Church has been—
The deadliest foe to love and Art.

FRUITLESS CREATION.

I.

THE FIRST STAR.

UPON the stocks the first star-vessel waited.
The bright prow flashed and gleamed.
Within his soul the great Shipwright debated :
He doubted, and he dreamed.

“ The ship is shaped. The masts and shrouds are ready :
Its Builder’s work is o’er.
Soft river-waves around the gold bows eddy ;
It yearns to quit the shore.

“ Yet shall I launch it ’mid the wild commotion
Of the outer air and sea ?
Can my star-ship withstand the fierce real ocean ?
Will it steer back to me ?

“ When launched upon the seas of space exceeding
All measurement and bound,
Will it be lost ? Will my star triumph, speeding
O’er depths no lead can sound ?

“ I hesitate. Shall I impart my being
To others, less than I ?
Shall I send forth this star,—then watch it fleeing
Lone through the unkindred sky ?

"The void is dark, and in the gloom is sweetness ;
Safety for it, for me.
Shall I break up the lampless gloom's completeness,
Saying to the first star : ' Be ' ? "

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And then the Maker's soul within him reasoned :
" If, when I make a sun,
I deepen night ; if good deeds must be seasoned
With evil, every one ;

" If, when I send my winds to range the valleys
And breathe forth peace and bliss,
With passionate force they search the woods' green alleys,
And ravish when they kiss ;

" If bluest waves must at the storm's hoarse bugle,
Arrayed in furious white,
Bay round the bows of labouring ships that struggle
Through the stupendous night ;

" If, having made sweet love, divine and tender
And full of purest bloom,
Man must attack the flower, and mar its splendour,
And plant lust in its room ;

" If woman, whom my thought would make resplendent,
Whom I will grandly mould,
Must change into man's slave, on man dependent,
And sell her love for gold ;

" If this be so, let not my star-ship wrestle
With life and space and time !
Within some creek I had best lay up my vessel,
Nor risk the voyage sublime."

So pondered God.—Then his resolve was taken.
 (With what result, we know.)
God signalled with his hand,—with voice unshaken
 Said to the first star: “Go.”

II.

THE LAST STAR.

THE thought of God had flowed for years past numbering
 Into the facts of time.
Through age on age God watched, with gaze unslumbering,
 Sorrow and sin and crime.

God watched the grief that follows first love's rapture :
 From his great throne in space
He watched maybe some city's blood-stained capture,
 Or death-throes of a race.

He saw the dead beneath his white moons lying ;
 He heard gaunt lions roar :
He heard the groans and curses of the dying ;
 He heard ships strike the shore.

He marked the doom that weighs down all creation ;
 He saw love change to shame :
He saw death sweep the stars with devastation ;
 He saw hell's leaping flame.

He saw love's bloom forsake each woman's features,
 As old in turn they grew :
He saw disease waste millions of his creatures ;
 He saw the leper's hue.

He saw faith seize its victims and devour them ;
He saw mad hatred rage :
He saw pure women strive, man's lusts deflower them,
From darkling age to age.

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He sent his Sons. To star on star he sent them,
Love's messengers sublime.
Mad unbelief rose, armed to circumvent them :
Death conquered them, and time.

He sent his eldest Son to one doomed city :
But him the people slew.
Man steeled his heart against Christ's tender pity,
And so man's sorrow grew.

Ever the same ! As Christ was born of Mary,
So other Christs were born.
Their various fates in one point did not vary ;
Each Christ was crowned with thorn.

If in nought else the vast star-hosts resemble
Each other, all alike
Smote their own Christs with hands that did not tremble,
And lifted spears to strike.

Wherever genius, born of God and woman,
Flashed on a world's dim way,
Its fellow-beings strove with hate inhuman
To quench the genius-ray.

Wherever God appeared, in seer or poet,
Satan appeared as well.
God's hand, revealing heaven, disclosed below it
The yawning gulfs of hell.

God pondered long.—Then his resolve was taken.
The heavens in darkness deep
He wrapped. The voice that bade the first star waken
Said to the last star : “ Sleep.”

III.

THE SECOND PARADISE.

YET, ere that star was quite destroyed,
A tenderer thought of pity came :
God would not leave the heavens quite void ;
There still should burn one beacon-flame.

One star should still through leagues of gloom
Fling light, though all stars else were dead.
For countless mighty suns a tomb !
For one small star new birth instead !

For one small star another day,
And for two human beings as well
More life to use, or fling away ;
A grander heaven, or deeper hell.

“ For”—thus God said—“ two I will choose,
The sole survivors these shall be :
For mine own purpose I will use
This rearguard of humanity.

“ They shall rule o’er their star alone,
Lords of its wastes of wood and plain :
The whole wide earth shall be their throne,
Their vast impregnable domain.

"The past shall perish. Not a sign
Shall testify of ancient hours.
No ghosts of dead cold stars shall shine,
Nor pale ghosts of forgotten flowers.

"All shall be new. Ay, once again
An Adam and an Eve shall be
Sole in the glory of their reign
O'er silent earth and sailless sea.

"And these shall love me. I shall find
In these the recompense I sought
In vain, in vain, amid mankind,
Born of mine unripe earlier thought.

"Man failed, and woman failed as well :
I sweep the whole race to their tomb.
Man staggered, woman wholly fell ;
Tearless, I leave them to their doom.

"Two spotless spirits alone I save :
These two shall carry out my plan ;
Shall live, and grow beyond the grave
To perfect woman, perfect man.

"But let their love be holy and chaste !
On this one point the whole depends :
Let not love's image be defaced,
Disfigured, for ignoble ends.

"Let them develop onward, up
From man to angel, but abstain
From quenching at wild passion's cup
A thirst whose quenching is not gain.

“ Let passion perish,—passion slew
The whole primeval world indeed !
Now I would make all wholly new,
And gift man with a nobler creed.

“ Grow on to angelhood,—disdain
To recreate the lower type
Upon this sorrowing earth again :
Your star for higher forms is ripe.”

IV.

THE SECOND FALL.

The Man.

I AM as Adam, thou art Eve ; we stand
Lonely at last upon a lonely star.
The lot of those who peopled earth was grand,
But our dispeopling doom is grander far.

We form the first link with a higher race :
All earth's old passions vanish into air.
I see the dawning angel in thy face ;
I mark heaven's halo brightening round thy hair.

We, letting all old instincts fade and flee,
Dismissing all that marred the race's powers,
Shall add new glory to an unknown sea,
Mix tenderer fragrance with the unborn flowers.

For every blossom suffered at the birth
Of sin,—the fields took on a sombre hue :
Gladness forsook the green old festive earth ;
The waves grew grey that once were joyous blue.

Love has to answer for the stormy past :
Love, guided well by woman's traitorous hand,
Has wrecked the stars—till this, the very last,
On which to-day with lonely feet we stand.

Thou art the culprit,—thou, with eyes so sweet
And lips that seem like pure half-opened flowers,
Hast forced the world's Creator to retreat :
The power to extinguish love at last is ours !

The Woman.

NAY ! 'tis the power to make a new beginning
That's ours, to shed new splendour o'er the sea.
If love be sin, then very sweet is sinning :
Sin shall endure throughout eternity.

Was ever rose less pure in that it nestled,
Luxuriant, on some bosom warm and white ?
When God with Chaos' ebon darkness wrestled,
It was to give love never-ending light.

Was ever star less brilliant at the casement,
Has ever moon with lesser lustre gleamed,
Watching some lover in sweet first amazement
Kissing the lips of which for years he dreamed ?

Wilt thou resume with speechless exultation
The passionate raptures of past years untold,
See in my eyes the love-looks of a nation,
A century's sunshine in my hair of gold ?

The flowers of all the past, the loves resplendent
That starlike lit old cities, hills, and plains,
Are all for thee,—on thee they wait attendant :
Lo ! Cleopatra burns within my veins.

Holding my hand, quite fearless thou mayest enter
Strange bowers of love in many a far-off place :
For thee shall Fate with ardent touch concentrate
All beauty in one incomparable face.

Wilt thou consent to make me mighty mother
Of timeless generations yet to arise ?
Adam begat one world—beget another !
Make fruitful all the dark womb of the skies !

Be father of the years beyond man's numbering ;
Propel afresh the life-throbs of the race
Along the channels where life pauses, slumbering :
Behold new starlight, gazing on my face !

Wilt thou consent to force the Lord to carry
Star-torches into regions weird and dim,—
To plant new life in ever-widening starry
Blue heaven-fields, life that flows from us, not him ?

Wilt thou consent, O mortal, firm, unfearing,
To crowd the lifeless heaven that o'er us gleams
With fleets of planets through the dark waves steering,
Lord of a kingdom mocking mortal dreams ?

This thou canst do, and more,—the moment fateful,
August and solemn, calls thee to decide.
Above us loom vast starless heavens and hateful :
Around us stretch lone lifeless fields and wide.

God cannot bar thy way, for lo ! I call thee.
My womb the power of endless life contains.
The torrent of God's wrath need not appal thee :
A stronger life-stream pulses through my veins.

He who consents to wed me shall be stronger
Than God—ay, more than conqueror in the fight.
His force shall further reach, and hold out longer :
God took six days to toil—take thou one night !

Upon my lips in one sweet night of wonder
Seal thou thine image—safe the gift shall be,
Though round us rang God's curse in very thunder,
Till time exhausted lifts faint wings to flee !

Trust thou the power of fatherhood residing
Within thy soul to me—Disperse the gloom !
The winds of winter look to thee for guiding :
Raise the dead summers from their darkling tomb.

Lo ! at thy word the June-days bright and burning
Shall flash their spears once more against the sun :
Within new lovers' hearts shall wake the old yearning ;
Win me ! even so our daughters shall be won.

New buoyant springs, whose young hearts leap for gladness,
Shall fill the warm pure air with scent of may :
New autumns, full of soft and tremulous sadness,
Feel at love's touch that sadness melt away.

Thou shalt be lord of all the circling seasons ;
Lord of the summer, as of winter's snows :
Ruler and lord of all the dark sea's treasons ;
Lord of the love that beckons from the rose.

Thou, the creator of the new world's rapture,
Shalt share the passionate life that is to be :
Preside, it may be, at some new Troy's capture,
Hold the steep pass at some Thermopylæ.

Thou, the creator of the new world's sorrow,
Shalt write the tragic drama of the race :
On some far-off and unforeseen to-morrow
See hope die out in some new Jesus' face.

Ay, thou shalt hear anew that cry of terror
Pierce to the stars, ere Jesus falls back dead—
“ Father, was all my faith one vast wild error ?
Father—does heaven contain a fiend instead ? ”

New cities shall be thine, new Londons greet thee ;
New fiercer life than that which throbbed of old
Along the madding streets surge round thee and meet thee ;
New sunsets tinge their skies with stormier gold.

What if the sins of many a new strange city
Outshine the sins of Greece, the crimes of Rome ?
While life and love press on, let no heart pity !
Let generations vanish like the foam !

Ay, like the waves of their own seas let nations
Rise into light, flash high, then disappear,—
Calm joys succeed to stormy tribulations,
And golden springs to many a snow-clad year.

New poets, mightier than the great who slumber,
Through the broad portals of the years shall move :
But all shall sing of me,—of all their number
Thorn-crowned, sin-marred, not one shall fail to love.

Music shall seek the skies, a form imperial :
But, as more skilled time's strong musicians grow,
Still must love render the wild strings ethereal ;
I sway them, whether their hearts will or no.

New sculptors, marble-moulding, still for ever
Their heavenliest impulse from my form shall take.
Shall one curve pass from human memory? Never!
Dead marble shall be deathless for my sake.

Anew the vast cathedrals where love sleeping
Waited love's longed-for resurrection morn
Shall rise, and hear the sound of women weeping,
The passionate prayers of races yet unborn.

With kingly wealth impassioned Art combining
Shall raise bright palaces in many a land :
But ever love's shall be the heart designing,
And love's the shaping and adorning hand.

Nought shall evade us ! by this sweet transgression,
This noble sin, if sin indeed it be,
We shall for ever stamp our own impression
On stars and sun, and towns and hills and sea.

Nor only heaven again in all its glory
Thou shalt compel the Lord to recreate :
Thou shalt rewrite the legend, the fierce story,
Of hell,—reprint man's epic poem of hate.

Again shall Torquemada's spirit sinister
Flash forth upon the world, blood-stained yet grand ;
Ambassador for God, yet Satan's minister,
Climbing the stairs of heaven with dripping hand.

Again shall many a prelate's voice of thunder
Proclaim his own flock saved, the heathen doomed.
At hell's Bastille again shall sweet love wonder,
And weep for thousands in its vaults entombed.

Again shall man, invincible, eternal,
With thousand-throated laugh of mocking scorn
Roll back the gates barred by the hands infernal,
And flood night's dungeons with the sunlit morn.

Again shall battle's fierce throbs course and tingle
Through ardent souls on many a future sea :
Again smoke-vomiting iron fleets commingle ;—
Their guns await one signal-flash from thee !

Thou hast to speak the word that hurls an ocean
Of sword-points at some far-off Waterloo
Against calm squares : thine is the intense emotion
Of combat, ever-fierce and ever-new.

Thine is the fury of battle—thine for ever
Love's pleasure ; young lips pause at lips most sweet,—
Apart, they wait thy mandate.—Wilt thou never
Speak the one radiant word that bids them meet ?

Thou hast the power to bid wild passion waken ;
The power to bid great countless stars arise
Upon the night wherethrough with heart unshaken
The wife who seeks her lover peers and flies.

Hand thrills not hand till thou dost join them—never
Without thy will can one glad sin be done.
Thou canst blindfold the husband,—thou for ever
Canst bring sweet darkness, and blindfold the sun.

The woman watching in her moonless chamber
Dreads lest love's foot i' the darkness go astray :
But thou canst light love's lamp of golden-amber,
The summer moon that shows love's foot the way.

Thou hast the power to unbar the morning's portal :
Thou canst restore the sun's kiss to the wave.
Love, slain by God, will rise up, vast, immortal,
If thou wilt summon Love's form from the grave.

Say to the drowséd waters, turning seaward,
"Awake!"—to heaven say, "Let the darkness flee!"
Scatter the soul's deep darkness, turning meward :
Lift up thine eyes, thy princely face, on me.

Wilt thou consent to be the king-creator
On whom the eyes of the ages shall be bent,—
Wilt thou, my slave, be to all else dictator,—
Wilt thou consent to love me ?

The Man.

I consent.

DEAD FLOWERS.*

A TUFT of mignonette, a withered rose !
Numberless foolish hearts have treasured such.
Now, as I lift them from their long repose,
They turn to dust and crumble at a touch—
Poor flowers that meant so much !

They meant—pure love and limitless belief
In summer's faithfulness, in sunny skies :
They mean—one lonely pang of silent grief,
Just one true tear that in a moment dries,
For even sorrow dies.

So with the millions who have hoarded flowers :
The frail love-token lasts, the heart's love goes.
Man's vaunted strength and woman's boasted powers
Are more ephemeral even than the rose,
The frailest flower that blows !

A withered rose, a tuft of mignonette—
How passing weak must be the human heart,
For these outlive even love, outlast regret,
Abide even when grim pain, with blunted dart,
Makes ready to depart.

* This poem is reprinted from *Lippincott's Magazine* by the kind permission of the Editor.

THE SINGERS OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY.*

WHEN the twentieth century fadeth, when the dusk is round it
closing fast,

When it hears each singer sadly, knowing that each song may
be the last ;

Will the singers it remembers, glancing back along the years
of bloom,

Be diviner than the singers chanting through our century's
sun and gloom ?

What strange wars and tribulations will the far-off voices have
to sing !

Creeds and thrones of newer peoples : flowers of many another
laughing spring :

Sunrise over many a cornfield red with battle's blood-stains, it
may be :

Moonlight over wastes of breakers, hideous shipwreck on full
many a sea :

Love in many a grove and bower, burning love with many an
honeyed word—

Love whose message old as history seems half whispered, never
fully heard :

Love co-equal with the ages—love who though his singers fail
and pass

Is as young as woman's beauty, or the dew-spheres on the
morning grass.

* This poem is reprinted from the *Universal Review* by the kind permission of the Editor.

Yet though grand the future singers, stately though their
march of music be,
Our strange century hath been gladdened; woodland green
and lake and silver sea,

These have heard our century's singers. What glad faces
shone beneath the light
Of the passionate early morning, when the fields of Europe
rang with fight!

Far-off, very far, it seemeth. Close beside those early singers
stood
Blood-smeared wild-eyed Revolution, and her spirit mingled
with their mood.

Something of her ardent message Wordsworth, Shelley, Byron,
Coleridge, caught:
Somewhat of her fiery nature wove itself within their inmost
thought.

But the mountains soon from Wordsworth hid the red and
blood-streaked dawn of day:
To his spirit Revolution had but one pale far-off word to say.

Then he turned with growing rapture to the valleys' calm, the
mountains' might;
Rested 'mid the solemn silence of the countless starlit peaks
by night:

Chose amid the hills to ponder rather on the great Creator's
plan
Than to hear mad Paris thunder from her cannon-throats the
rights of man:



Chose to hear the wild streams murmur, chose to watch the
flashing waters gleam,
Joining in the green fields' gladness, sharing in the mountains'
lonely dream.

Grey-haired venerable Landor full of classic passion lived and
died :
Strong-browed drama-moulding Browning won our woman-poet
for his bride.

She too was this century's singer,—she who into deathless
music wrought
All the wealth of woman's passion, all man's sober strength of
weightier thought ;

She who taught the world for ever what a power resides in
woman's soul
When the brain is there to guide it, and the sovereign genius
to control.

Shelley, too, divinely laboured—made the half of life a lyric
dream ;
Into music wove the moonlight, made in song a lovelier star-
light gleam :

Made in verse the blossoms fairer, poured a nobler light on
hill and plain ;
Built in song a lyric Eden, brought to Adam spotless Eve
again.

And he showed in noble drama, dealing with the old tale of
deadly wrong,
That his hand could wield the lightning, not alone the lyre of
loveliest song.

Later on our brother singers fought their battle vast beyond
the wave :

Longfellow and Whittier struggled, hurling slavery to its blood-
red grave.

Now at last the slave is chainless, through their power of brain
and force of heart :

Lowell, Bryant, countless others—nobly each one played a
giant's part.

Poe with mystic sweetness murmured—left us lyrics time's
touch may not wrong :

Whitman spake but half his message, failing through the
immenseness of his song ;

Failing through his very largeness of desire co-equal with the
land

—Left a vast work unaccomplished, waiting for some even
mightier hand.

Far in France Love found a singer, in whose rich voluptuous
song should be

Somewhat of its own strange music—somewhat of Love's own
eternity :

And the singer's heart responded, feeling Love's fair beauty
over-much,

Feeling all things else ephemeral, just mere foam-bells melting
at the touch :

Love to Musset was so lovely that the whole world brightened
at its feet ;

When love passed the whole world darkened, when it vanished
nothing else was sweet.

Yet for ever bears he witness what the world is like in love's
first hour :

We may win the fruit he won not, for he never sought beyond
the flower.

We may see the soul he saw not fill the eyes of love with
deathless light :

We may see the stars he saw not lift its veil of darkness from
the night.

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In the dawning of the era swift-eyed, seeing, the laurelled
singers rose :

But the God-endowed blind singer, pale and patient, waited
for its close.

Never yet the rolling waters held more might of colour than
they hold,

Marston, in thy deep rich music ; there the sunset breathes
and burns with gold.

Was the tender heart of poet ever filled with tenderer sweeter
things ?

In thy song the roses whisper, heard of thee the "garden
fairy" sings.

Lonely, many waited for thee—blind, that thou mightest give
them eyes to see :

Jealous flowers and hills and rivers left forlorn by Shelley
looked to thee ;

All the unsung heart of Nature, many a voiceless lake and
silent stream :—

Many a star no singer heeded through thy music flashed its
infant gleam.¹

*

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¹ The above lines were written before the early and lamented death of Philip Bourke Marston, the blind poet.

For the whole of Nature never, bride-like, conquered by a
single bard,

Kissed his lips and stood before him, loosed her purple deep
hair golden-starred.

If the whole of Nature truly were one bride for one great king
of song,

Would not kingly Victor Hugo lure her coy reluctant feet
along?

Would not she the spirit of Nature who was girlish, young,
when Shelley came,

Meet, mature, the century's singer, Hugo,—wreath his brows
with fadeless fame?

Other singers win the kisses of the flowers her handmaids
sweet and white :

But for him her voice of ocean sounds, and calls him towards
her through the night.

He, the giant message hearing, leaves all friends and passes
forth alone,

Knowing that the woman calls him, Nature, to be sharer of
her throne :

Knowing that while other singers worship at her altar, then
depart,

He may watch her eyes for ever, he the lord and ruler of her
heart.

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Yet the age hath room for others. When the chant of Words-
worth waxéd old

Tennyson, most English-hearted, sang to English cliff and
English wold.

His the message not of ocean, not the kiss that floats across
the sea ;

His the calm heart of the valleys, filled with many a flower
and golden tree :

His all English women's beauty, and the sweetness of our rose-
hung lanes,

And the lovelier perfect sweetness that in English women's
hearts remains :

His the glory of the combat, clash of splintering spear and
ringing shield,

Courteous strife of many a tourney, fiery strife of many a
blood-stained field.

Fame of battle's wild narration, crown of martial verse, with
Scott he shares—

Scott, through whom mankind for ever breathes the sweetness
of the mountain-air :

Scott, through whom mankind for ever hears the ancient
border minstrels sing,

Tweed "repine" and Teviot murmur, and a thousand moun-
tain-runnels ring :

Scott, through whom the world for ever grasps the grandeur of
the feudal time ;

Learns to love the grey old castles, grey with clambering
lichen, red with crime.

At the feet of Europe's monarchs Danton in his huge Titanic
mirth

Flung the head of Louis bleeding. Then another era dawned
on earth.

But two singers scorned the era, turned away with eager hearts
and eyes ;

Scott resought his grey old castles, Morris dreamed beneath
far sunny skies.

Morris took the Greek wise legends,—made us hear through
London's dreary roar

Witch Medea's luring laughter, and the wave that leaped from
Jason's oar :

Sang to us wild Northern Sagas, many a weird old chant and
mythic rune ;

Made us love the Volsung Legend, love the grey-eyed won-
drous queen Gudrun :

Made us with Pygmalion marvel as the white stone grew to
woman's form,—

Cold eyes flashing into sunlight, marble changing into bosom
warm :

Made us feel with Galatea what the glory of passion ought to
be ;

Made her break time's marble silence once, and then reseek
eternity.

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Matthew Arnold felt the *Zeit-Geist* bear him into regions cold
and dim ;

Faith was only for the weak-brained, not the clear-souled poet
—not for him.

All our century's sadness smote him : Science ruled him, ruled
him to the last,

Though the Church enchained his father, loyal-souled, the
servant of the past.

Never more would sign or portent—so the poet's keen-edged
tongue proclaimed—
Flash upon a world turned sceptic, of faith's earlier follies
grown ashamed.

Yet how brightly blossoms glitter, here and there, through his
world-weary thought !
Gems of love and jewels of fancy that the poet's happier genius
wrought.

So with Clough—the grim doubt seized him, drew him forth
from sweet faith's golden shore :
This alone he knew for certain—that the old hope could avail
no more.

Not with Kingsley—he for ever, casting logic's dead weight
overboard,
Held to the old faith, stern and steadfast ; knotty points he
settled—with his sword.

Fearless noble deathless singer ! while his England still con-
fronts the sea
Eyes shall soften, hearts shall tremble, at the pathos of the
“ Sands of Dee.”

Would he had written a thousand ballads !—even when he
wore the bonds of prose
Brighter gleamed the ferns of Devon, lovelier colour glittered
in the rose.

Round him thronged the Elizabethans, grand old worthies of
the heroic time ;
Is not “ Westward Ho ! ” a poem rich in music though it
lacks a rhyme ?

Rhyming subtly came Rossetti—he who with the Italian
music-force

Re-imbued the English sonnet, gave the sonnet-stream an
altered course.

Many a soul in many a sonnet, many a burst of lyric rapture,
strove

Passion's tenderest lore to utter, stars to ravish from the brow
of love :

He, with mightier touch, for ever in one sonnet sealed the
depth, the height,

Sweetness, strangeness, awe of passion, all the mystery of the
nuptial night.

Can there be a greater glory than this crown man's judgment
hath conferred ?

Even that, singing after Shakespeare, still Rossetti spake a
wanting word.

Edwin Arnold's "Light of Asia" turned our eyes from English
bowers of green,

Turned our thoughts from strife of moderns, from our Europe's
over-crowded scene ;

From the clash of sects and parties, all that makes our
Western life a storm,—

Set before us in the old sunlight, calm and restful, Buddha's
princely form.

Generations pale and vanish—stars that now are old were
fair and young

When that "Light" shone forth resplendent which the poet of
to-day has sung.

Somewhat as of Buddha's greatness, somewhat of his strength
that cannot cease,
Fills his singer's soul that points us past the storms of time
to timeless peace :

Peace that reigned in the early ages, ere our Western warrior-
life begun ;
Peace,—and Arnold's song resumes it, full of light and fervent
with the sun.

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But the century hath another whom the thunder crowned and
sought for bard ;
Whom the lightning kissed, and loved him ; for whose soul the
sea-wind wrestled hard.

Byron ! still the lonely Jura seeks thee, widowed, weary,—and
her sighs
Rolling through the rolling thunder find no kindred heart nor
song-replies :

Unto thee, as unto Musset, passion was the gift of perfect
worth,
Light of woman's eyes the loveliest light that left the heaven
and sought the earth :

Unto thee—not unto Musset—was the dark-blue ocean-waste
divine ;
Through thy song a thousand wave-crests curl and sparkle, rise
and leap and shine.

Yet the wild sea's stormy message through a younger fiery
singer thrills,
And his heart hath caught the rapture somewhat of the green
far foam-flecked hills.

Swinburne ! somewhat of the eternal might and wrath and
rapture of the sea

Through thy sea-like song hath sounded, somewhat of the soul
of all things free :

And the heart of many a goddess left forlorn through many a
weary day

Dares to glance up, and rejoices hearing the old note within
thy lay.

Bowed and full of desolation was full many a goddess' golden
head

When along the viewless valleys rang the news that bright-
souled Keats was dead :

Eyes long dry and tearless wept him, pale was Venus watching
at his tomb,

Stars put off their robes of splendour, and for years no rose
won all its bloom.

Now the gods shake off their mourning. Lo ! again the
trembling water glows

Round about the form of Venus, wakeful after over-long
repose :

Once again a lovelier music than the music of our hills and
streams

Brings again the thought of Sappho, thrills the evening with
the morning's dreams.

*

*

Yet a note of sadness mingles with our song that praises these
who sing.

All must pass. One century forward, just as blue shall gleam
the swallow's wing.

Pink the early almond-blossom still amid the branches brown
shall shine,
And the bees shall hum for ever through the ivy and round
about the vine.

One live flower shall have the magic all dead things and
bloodless to surpass :
Who can dream on dead pale singers, when the kingcups
glitter through the grass ?

Who will ponder on our singing, when the very queen of song
is there ?
We may sing of passion's sweetness, but the songless lips will
find it fair.

All our crowns of blood-stained laurel are not worth the crown
the maiden brings,
Giving passion to her lover, giving but one glance to him who
sings.

Though our singing live for ever, little is our sweetest singing
worth ;
Deathless value is in the love-song of the glad old everlasting
earth.

Deathless glory is in the love-song of the blue old everlasting
seas :
Endless sweetness in the chanting of the pure fatigueless
mountain-breeze.

We shall pass, but love shall linger,—linger while the golden
mornings gleam ;
Linger while the last white lily tells its love-tale to the listening
stream.

We shall pass, but love shall linger while the light in woman's
eyes is young,
Fair as if no soul had seen it, undescribed as if no soul had
sung.

Ghosts may wander through the starlight, ghosts of poets
crowned with phantom bays ;
All dead songs shall miss the magic of one thoughtless
throstle's living lays.

Every night the night's star thrilleth at the marriage-message
of the sea :
What grows old and grey in Nature? Nought that Nature
fashions ; only we.

Not more snowy was the primal than last April's dazzling
chestnut-bloom :
Bright last night the star-hosts glittered, bright as when they
flashed on Eden's gloom.

Round about each new-born poet arms most white his virgin
era flings :
"Never have I heard sweet singing"—so she whispers to the
soul that sings.

"Never have I owned a lover!" so she says with glance half
shy, half wild :
"What is love?" she whispers gently, nestling closer like a
loving child.

"What is love?" she whispers softly,—and will whisper till
the starlit deep
Watches not the strife of mankind, only mankind's unawaken-
ing sleep.

LOVE'S PLEADING.

IF you love me, love of mine,
Let me feel it day by day !
Never take the light divine
Of your tender love away !
Let me feel it when we meet,
By the joy that fills my heart
Making every moment sweet ;
By my sorrow, when we part !

Let me feel that you are mine,
When the autumn leaves alight ;
When the suns of summer shine ;
When the stars begem the night.
Let me feel it hour by hour,
As the seasons come and go :
When the golden kingcups flower ;
When the fields are white with snow.

Let me feel it in your hand ;
Let me see it in your eyes :
—Then will sky and sea and land
Gleam with light of Paradise !
Let me hear it in your voice !
Let me know that love is there,
Bidding all my heart rejoice,
Casting out a life's despair.

Let me feel that love will last
 Though the seasons fade and wane :
 That, when Time itself is past,
 Love will store its golden grain.
 Though the restless waves may chafe,
 Though the storm-wind smite the shore,
 Let me feel that love is safe,
 Far beyond the billows' roar !

Let me, as time onward flows
 Stealing sunshine from the air,
 Stealing colour from the rose,
 Stealing blackness from your hair,—
 Let me, as the days depart,
 Feel you growing through the days
 Ever dearer to my heart,
 Ever fairer to my gaze.

Let me feel that, when we met,
 That was life's propitious hour.
 Though Time's sickle may be set
 To the grass-blade and the flower,
 Let me, darling, know that you
 Dwelling in love's sunnier clime,
 Where the skies are ever blue,
 Are beyond the reach of Time.

Let me find—when dart on dart
 Strikes me, giving little rest—
 Perfect refuge in thine heart,
 Holiest haven on thy breast !
 Let me, when with hate increased
 All the world's one hostile line,
 Feel that one sweet heart at least
 Beats in unison with mine.

Let me feel that all that's best
In my life to thee I owe ;
Ay, and every hour most blest
Of my seasons here below.
What in me is good and pure
—If some stray pure thoughts there be—
What of life's work may endure,
True love, all I owe to thee.

Let me feel, if all forsake,
One is true for evermore.
When the lonely wild waves break
All along life's lonely shore,
Let me feel, if thou art there,
With thy faithful hand in mine,
That in thousands through the air
All the stars of summer shine.

Be on earth my perfect queen,
Tender, loving, helpful, fond ;
Lead me past things felt and seen
To our unseen home beyond.
Let the mystery in thine eyes
Ever sacred presage be
Of a light beyond the skies,
Of a land we cannot see.

Help me onward day by day ;
When my weary thoughts despair,
Soothe my weariness and say,
“ Wait till night. The stars are there ! ”
When my restless thoughts repine
Longing that the night be done,
Whisper, with thy hand in mine,
“ Wait till morning brings the sun.”

So for ever be my guide.
 Weary was I, sad, alone—
 All the world I had defied,
 But I bent to thee, my own.
 Haughty helm and vengeful sword
 At thy word I flung away :
 Ceased from hatred, and adored ;
 Half remembered how to pray.

Teach me to be true and strong,
 Brave and humble, pure and glad :
 Let thy soul inspire my song ;
 Let my soul no more be sad.
 Change my hatred of the world
 Into perfect love of thee,
 As the river onward hurled
 Calms its wild wave in the sea.

Change my dark despairing soul ;
 Lead my thoughts towards peace and rest.
 Lo ! in thee I find my goal ;
 Lo ! at thee I end my quest.
 Let me feel that thou art mine—
 Gentlest, thou, of all things born :
 Let me feel that I am thine—
 I, whose very breath was scorn.

Lead me slowly through the love,
 Changeless, vast, I give to thee,
 Back to hope, if so it prove ;
 On to heaven, if this may be.
 When this fleeting life is past,
 Past its suns that set and rise
 Lead me, angel-love, at last
 Back with thee to Paradise !

MOMENTS.

THE sun streamed over vale and hill,
How joyous all things seemed !
Far in the distance, clear and still,
The yellow corn-fields gleamed.
Fair was the summer land ;
I held in mine your hand ;
Your eyes drew mine, and in their depths I dreamed,
Holding in mine your hand !

Then, on another golden day,
Among the wildwood bowers,
Love had its golden word to say
The while we gathered flowers.
“ O love, my heart is thine ;
Be thou for ever mine ;
Life's loveliest purest gifts will all be ours,
If thou art ever mine ! ”

Another day, another day—
The summer's heart was dead :
The air was calm, the sky was grey,
The maple's leaves were red.
“ The leaves of summer change :
The very sun grows strange :
Can love abide the same for aye ? ” you said.
“ True love can never change.”

Another moment grand and sweet

My heart remembers well :

The deep-blue ocean at our feet,

Broad-billowing, rose and fell.

I thought of the past years :

My eyes were full of tears :

How sweet a tale has faithful love to tell

Of all those sweet past years !

And then that glorious August night !

The starshine filled the air :

Would any star give any light,

Love, if you were not there ?

If I could travel far

From mystic star to star,

Would not their glory strike me with despair ?

My heaven is where you are.

And then that sunny day in spring !

Red shone the tulips' ranks :

The brimstone butterfly's bright wing

Glittered along the banks.

If you were far away,

The green spring would be grey :

No rose for its first birthday would give thanks,

If you were far away !

O moments sweet, and moments grand,

And you the queen of each !

This earth would be a dreary land,

Ay sorrowful past speech,

Did not your soft eyes shine

Making all things divine

And bringing peace words have no power to reach,

O one true love of mine !

And there are moments, it may be,
As sweet, as grand, as these,
Beyond the stars, beyond the sea,
Beyond the green spring-trees,—
Beyond our summer's bloom,
Beyond pale winter's gloom,
Beyond our mountains' snow-clad terraces,
Beyond the darkling tomb !

In what far other land than this,
Beneath what heavenly sky,
Shall we with wild undreamed-of bliss
Meet, sweetheart, you and I ?
In what far other land
Shall we together stand,
Past death, past pain and parting, by and bye,—
In what far other land ?

LOVE'S GIFTS.

THE bright blue wave were sad and drear
• Without its seabird white :
The rose would die, did it not hear
 The soft breeze sing at night :
Lest heaven should be the storm-wind's prey,
 Love made the grand sun shine :
Lest clouds should cover all my day,
 He made thy splendour mine !

Love sent the sweetest thing on earth
 To charm me and to chain ;
To thrill my soul to tenderest mirth,
 Or—pierce my heart with pain !
Love bade the blue sea kiss the land,
 The gold shore kiss the sea,
Then made the marvel of thine hand,
 And brought my queen to me.

Love sent the rose its sister rose ;
 The red rose loves the white :
Love gave the gentian to the snows,
 The snow-drifts to the height :
The bluebell to the grass Love gave,
 The green grape to the vine ;
He gave the seabird to the wave,
 But made his song-bird mine.

I am content—supremely so.
Thou art my one thing fair :
Thou with the neck more white than snow,
And with the raven hair.
Love gave the lily to the stream,
The sea-weed to the sea,
And one wild endless passionate dream
Of love Love gave to me !

Love gave the saint his heavenly skies
And dream of heavenly rest ;
My dreamland is within thine eyes !
My heaven is on thy breast !
A glory glitters in the flowers,
A light is on the sea ;
The light, the glory, both are ours,
For both are born of thee.

The snowdrop now is strangely white,
Far whiter than of old ;
The tulip's cup is strangely bright,
It gleams with magic gold.
The orient scatters lavish pearls,
They fall on land and sea ;
They are to deck thy raven curls,—
I gather them for thee.

A longer tarriance in the sky
The royal sunset makes ;
It watches thee, it cannot fly :
The sea-wind's wild heart breaks.
Creation brings its gifts to thee ;
But Love does more than this,—
Gifts richer than of shore or sea
Love gives me in thy kiss.

Love made the corn-flowers for the wheat,
 The oak-tree for the glade ;
 A thousand faces fair and sweet
 Love for man's pleasure made :
 Before me then thy perfect face
 Love set, and all was done—
 The moon is fair ; the moon gives place
 When Love calls forth the sun.

A million stars within the air
 Love's hand in triumph placed :
 With countless blossom-garlands fair
 The earth's green bowers he graced :
 Then unto me my single rose
 Love's hand in triumph brought,
 My single star, diviner far
 Than all I dreamed or thought.

FAREWELL !

WHEN morning comes, the last pale star
Must crowd all sail and flee :
The wave that leaps the harbour-bar
Says " Farewell " to the sea.
The violet in the hollow lane
May long to linger there :
Nay, it must pass ! The golden grain
Must leave the furrows bare.

" Farewell ! " they say, " Adieu ! " they cry,
All sweet sad earthly things :
The loveliest sun-kissed rose must die ;
The swallow spreads her wings.
The crocus with its golden smile
Must vanish from the grass :
The tulip tarries for awhile,
And then it too must pass.

Farewell ! farewell !—the saddest cry
That ever earth has heard :
So says the sunset to the sky,
The green bough to the bird.
So says the rainbow to the spray,
The linnet to her nest ;
So says the dying summer day
Unto the mountain's crest.

So many golden hours we've known,
May know so many yet ;
We've seen the sun ascend his throne,
Have watched the same sun set :
Will there be one last hour of all ?
Last hour of summer bloom,
Last green leaf trembling to its fall,
Last roseleaf to its doom ?

Oh sweetheart, must *we* say " Farewell ? "
Will all be over soon ?
Will that green pathway through the dell
With dying leaves be strewn ?
—Life's vessel glides away so fast,
Away from you and me :
We saw the hull—we see the mast—
That soon we shall not see !

THE SHORELESS DEEP.

I.

THE sweetest love is over
This world has ever seen.
No more am I your lover !
No more are you my queen !
The stars are in the sky, love,
They glitter as of old :
Starless are you and I, love,—
Our heavens are dark and cold.

Oh, if you had been true, love,
We could have conquered pain!
My whole soul trusted you, love
—It will not trust again.
The flowers again will brighten
At Spring's swift loving tread,
The waves will leap and lighten,
But oh, my heart is dead !

It was so little, surely—
I asked so little, dear ;
That you should love me purely,
And be my true love here.
I loved in man's strong fashion,
And valued far above
The sweetest gifts of passion
The simplest gift of love.

The tenderest love is over
That life has ever seen.
No more am I your lover !
No more are you my queen !
The stars in heaven are shining ;
Not one star shines for me !
There is no light for me to-night—
Oh, what light *can* there be?

II.

A boundless darkness covers,
Gloom utter and complete,
The souls of us—two lovers
Who once found sunlight sweet.
The gloom is full of terror,
The terror full of pain :
Somewhere there has been error,
Mistake,—that much is plain.
Misunderstanding ghastly,
Oh, this there must have been
Satan has triumphed vastly,
And stolen away my queen.
By means most strange and stealthy
The cruel deed was wrought :
Love deemed himself so wealthy ;
Lo ! Love possesses nought.
Love stays you not with yearning,
Arrests you not by prayer.
You pass a sudden turning—
Your figure is not there.
I strain my eyes in wonder ;
Nought is there to behold.
We twain are leagues asunder,
Who were one heart of old.

THE SONG OF MANHOOD.

Of all love's bloom and splendour
What relic will there be?—
Not even one message tender !
Not even a look for me !
“Lost !” “lost !” the wail of sadness
Goes shivering through my heart.
We met in perfect gladness :
In hopeless pain we part.

Just so some ship has started
Upon its eager way,
Bounding along light-hearted,
And mocking wind and spray.
The morning waves are bluer
Than heaven that smiles above
(Oh, was there one thing truer
In heaven, I thought, than love !)

Not yet the story closes ;
We know not what may be ;
What cruelty reposes
Within the sunlit sea :
What storms of bitter passion
Lie hid within the deep :
What schemes its waves can fashion
The while they seem asleep.

(How many a noble story
Of love has closed in gloom,
Starting in sun-kissed glory
And ending at a tomb !)—
The glad ship onward dances,
For all around is bright :
It meets not yet the glances
Of the malignant night.

It recks not yet of danger :
It knows not that the air
Can thrill with madness stranger
Than madness of despair.
It takes what sunrise brings it
Of golden-hued repose,
And every sunset flings it
An unimagined rose.

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'Mid waves' and winds' commotion
That ship is lost to sight ;
Lost on the shoreless ocean,
Lost in the starless night.
—Lost, hopeless, sailless, oarless,
Must now love's vessel be :
It enters darkness shoreless
That shrouds a shoreless sea.

LOVE'S CHOICE.

BECAUSE I feel that I cannot forget,
I thank thee, Lord !—Because for ever now
My eyes will meet the sinless eyes I met,
And see the dark hair shade a sinless brow :

Because, though she is dead,—ay, dead in shame,
Polluted through the villany of one
Who, lusting, did in love's dishonoured name
The meanest deed that ever on earth was done ;

Because, though she be lost, she for whose sake
I would have gone with singing to my tomb,
I think of her . . . as even the ice-bound lake
Dreams of green banks divine with summer's bloom :

Because I think of her, so sweet and pure
And tender—ere the villany of man
Spread forth its cautious net, its cunning lure,
And ended darkly what in light began :

Because I still can see within her eyes
The light of very heaven as once it gleamed ;
Because my heart, though in hell's depth it lies,
Will dream for ever as at first it dreamed :

Because the past is with me evermore ;
Because love is in me a changeless thing ;
Because the blue waves may forsake the shore,
Green leaves forget to deck the brow of Spring—

Because there is in me no power to change,
Because my pain is everlasting, Lord,
I thank thee with a passion grim and strange :—
My love thou slayest not with thy keen-edged sword.

If thou couldst change despair to joy of heart,
Then would there be no story of love to tell !
Love bids all untrue comforters depart,
And lest in heaven it falter, chooses hell.

A POET'S VENGEANCE.

I.

THIS is my vengeance—not to take away
My love, to leave it with you to the end ;
To speak to you, when flowers are fair ;
When starlight glistens, to be there ;
From the blue spotless summer skies to bend.
I may not speak in weak words? I can pray.

Pray that the higher self I would have died
To reach, and at its highest point to keep,
May ever, guided by God's hand,
Develop, blossom, grow, expand :
Pray that the fruits my hand may never reap
May fill God's fostering heart with joy and pride.

True, the pure freshness of our love is lost.
Your dagger smote (ah ! if it had but slain)—
The blow was cowardly, mean and base :
You should have struck before my face,—
I would have said, "Smite on—yea, smite again !"
But you—you struck when I was trusting most.

I trusted you, as man might trust his heart
To God his Maker,—gave you love supreme.
For years I laboured night and day
And only ceased from love, to pray :
I made your life for years a happy dream :
I crowned you with the laurels of my Art.

I would have loved you to the very end :
I would have shielded you from all things sad.
But you—you turned away to seek
False love, unfaithful, foolish, weak,
Perverse, half blind it may be, wholly mad ;
For one hour's pleasure you destroyed a friend.

You chose the lesser love, the meaner heart :
The nobler loving heart you crucified.
I gave you heaven : you gave me hell :
Was this thing womanly or well ?
You let the base man win you for his bride,
And bade the true strong husband-spirit depart.

Now do I curse you ? No : nor do I bless.
There is a living God in all these things.
God shall do justice to the twain :
In his safe hands I place my pain :
We both must face the judgment sure time brings ;
In one way love will deepen, not grow less.

In *this* way : love is truth, and truth must be
For ever now between us—that is clear.
All lies are o'er, they could not last ;
The untruth is buried in our past ;—
You love me, or you do not love me, dear :
We have to face the future—we shall see !

Your soul will grow, or not grow. If it grows,
There yet might be on some far future day
Peace for our spirits, autumnal rest,
A wedded calm in either breast
(This is the nobler end for which I pray :
Not passion's rapture—rapture of repose).

Ay once again, if you could be quite true,
True as a wife through all eternity,
Some happiness my heart might win,—
Some day I might forget the sin ;
I might hear glad birds singing, and the sea
Might even regain for me some note of blue.

But if your soul will grow not—If it still
Lingers as this man's plaything through the years,—
If you, a poet's love, his queen,
Can wholly choose a thing so mean,—
If you forget love's kisses, ay love's tears,—
If nothing now can move your nobler will,—

If, having once been loved with love most fair,
Most strong, most sweet, most gentle, you to-day
Can wholly turn your face aside,
Why then your true soul must have died !
Then God and love and I must turn away :
I meet God's eyes, and in them is despair.

Yes : if a woman's heart can quite forget
The countless happy moments that we shared,
If six years are as nothing, then
Indeed the creed of vulgar men
Would seem like truth—if you too can be snared
By diamonds glittering through a golden net.

II.

But if the nobler course may still be ours,
If you to whom I gave my heart can now
With perfect love of heart atone,
If you can be my very own,
My love with wifely eyes and honest brow,
We still may gather some immortal flowers.

I gave you love beyond the love I gave
Ever to any,—love beyond all speech :
You stabbed me deeplier far than all :
Must our love-temple wholly fall ?
Is there atonement, love, within our reach ?
Is there a passion deeper than the grave ?

I think there may be. Yes : I think the man
Who died on Calvary, and rose they say
Triumphant from the fast-closed tomb,
Might help us through this deadly gloom
And change our darkness into sunlit day.
No human soul can help, unless Christ can.

Is there a darkness star-proof evermore ?
A depth of hell where God's foot fails to tread ?
Height beyond height the heavens arise,
Vast heaven on heaven of starlit skies ;
Depth below depth hell's ocean seethes blood-red ;
Is it unsounded and without a shore ?

Is there a depth where God's glance cannot go ?
Darkness from which the Father shrinks away ?
Then Christ upon the cross in vain
Bore for our sakes unmeasured pain ;
Then is there no word hopeful left to say ;
We reap despair, whatever seed we sow.

But if the love of God can pierce the gloom,
Then man's love too can follow where God's goes.
My love can reach you evermore
And circle hell's sea with a shore
And smite the savage wave-crests to repose :
My love and Christ's love can outlive the tomb.

My love : for Christ and God and man are one,
And God can save you, burst your prison-bars.
Oh love, whose look dismays despair,
Can robe you in raiment pure and fair,—
As dark night jewels heaven's zone with the stars,
As morning gems heaven's forehead with the sun.

LIFE AND DEATH.

ROUND us spreads the eternal silence.—Not the silence of the deep

Lonely dark-blue open ocean, leagues from headland and from bay,—

Not the silence of the mountains where the solemn summits sleep,—

Not the silence of the star-land at the closing of the day,—
Not the silence of the forest, when its every leaf is still,

When the whole dense tropic woodland basks beneath the tropic sun,

Matches death's eternal silence. Wholly settled seems God's will :

When the human life is ended, then for us that life is done.

Not one sweet word ! Not a whisper from beyond the deadly gloom !

Not a single word to cheer us, us the living, on our way !
Not a single flash of torchlight to illuminate the tomb !

Never sunshine, never moonshine, never one thin starry ray !
Only yesterday they loved us—then their living eyes were bright—

Only yesterday we held them in our living warm embrace :
What has happened ? What has changed them ? Still the form rests in our sight ;

But the human love has vanished from the dead white quiet face.

Only yesterday they heard us, knew the loving voice and hand,

And to-day the furthest star-gleam in the blue heaven is more near.

What can measure the wild distance? As beside the dead we stand,

We confront a ghostly figure, not the figure once so dear.

Perfect silence, endless distance—past man's measure, past man's thought!

Depth no human lead can fathom—darkness utter and profound!

Well God keeps his final secret. All the ages have besought;

Every soul has craved an answer from the darkness. Not a sound!

Is it well, O God, to take them? Is it nobly, rightly, done?

Is this policy of darkness quite the grandest line of all?

If a son must lose his mother, or a mother lose her son,

Is it well to sweep the dead one out of earshot, out of call?

Would not one slight vision help us—just a whisper, just a word,

Just a green leaf sent for token, just a touch from out the gloom?

Life is changed from epic grandeur—it becomes three parts absurd,

One part bitter, when confronted with the sphinx-face of the tomb.

Yes, absurd : for through the sorrow and the mystic awe and dread

Something of grotesqueness glimmers, something farcical and strange.

Why does God create his millions, just to strike those millions dead?

Is he hampered, is he pestered, by the ceaseless love of change?

Trouble, endless toil and trouble, to complete a human life—

Pains to educate and train it—and it ends so very soon .

God provides the child a mother, and he sends the man a wife ;

Lest the earth trip in the darkness, lo ! he sends the earth a moon :

All seems full of thought and labour, wrought with endless love and care ;

Blue and grand is the wide ocean, green and flower-sown are the meads,

Full of star-lamps is the darkness, full of fragrance is the air,—

All the living world bears witness to the Lord God's mighty deeds ;—

Yes, and mightier than the star-land hung with lamps that gem the night,

Grander than the heaven of August when its utmost calm is won,

Is the rapture God created when he made the darkness bright

With the glory of love that needs not earthly moon or star or sun.

Yet it ends in utter darkness! All this noble work of God's
Ends abruptly, ends in failure. Death is Conqueror, so
it seems :

Sweetest flesh must turn to ashes, mightiest brains must mix
with clods,

Love must wake—within its coffin—from its life of pleasant
dreams.

Grandly God mapped out his drama, but the villain of the
piece

Was too forceful for the Playwright, Death has got the upper
hand :

When he stalks along the footlights, the light-hearted plaudits
cease ;

Death has introduced some "business" that the Author
never planned.

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Tales there are of ghosts and phantoms. Some have risen,
so they say :

Dying, some have warned their dear ones.—Premonitions
through the night

On the wings of dread have floated. With the dawning of
the day

News has come that some loved spirit has for ever taken
flight.

Tales there are,—ay, tales in plenty. Think of all the
millions though

Who have died and sent no token—not a whisper, not a
word !

Lo ! the morning brings a letter—Struggling hard the long
night through

Died our dearest : she was moaning, and we slept and never
heard !

What innumerable hosts have left us. Yet how little stir
they make !

Where contending armies battled, where they heaped the
plain with dead,
Nothing now is left to witness. Placid golden mornings
break ;

Where the red great wounds were bleeding, smile the quiet
poppies red.
All is sunshine, all is silence. Every year the corn-stalks
wave

Where the mighty warriors struggled on the field of
Waterloo :
Has a single soldier-spectre ever wandered from his grave?
Have the green leaves heard his footstep? Is his footmark
on the dew ?

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But God's answer came, soft-whispered through the silence of
the night :

"Have I moulded one fair planet? Can I not mould
thousands more?
Have I made the morning radiant with the great sun's golden
light?

Can I not devise new sunshine for the dead souls to adore?
Lo! I keep my solemn secret. But I keep it for your sakes.
To the gentle, to the simple, I can whisper through their
dream :

I can whisper sweetest comfort to the heart that well-nigh
breaks ;

When the stars of heaven are clouded, I can make my
starlight gleam.

“Not for genius is my message. Genius on the earth may rule,—

Sway the hearts of many women, win the worship of the rose ;

Genius is but as a pupil (not an apt one) in my school ;

What he doubts, and what he questions, the unlettered peasant knows.

Yes : the simple heart that trusteth never fails to hear my voice,

Knows my secret often better than the genius it may be ;

Catches even my faintest whisper, when I bid that heart rejoice,

Past the trumpets of the storm-winds, through the thunders of the sea !

“Did the humble ever dread me? Did the lowly patient heart

Ever tremble, as Death’s angel made a silence in the room?

Soul by soul, the human millions rise up softly and depart :

Summer after summer sends me every field’s and forest’s bloom.

Mothers yield to me their children, and the husband yields his wife,

And the night-time yields its starlight, all the splendour it has won :

Am not I, the Lord of deathland, also Lord of birth and life?

Am not I, the Lord of darkness, the creator of the sun ?

“Have not I presided hourly at a million blossoms’ birth?

Sent the starshine at its moment to assist the budding flower ?

With mine own right hand unfolded every fern-frond upon
earth?

To the pale plant sent the sunshine, to the thirsty plant
the shower?

Do I watch beside the portal of the countless births ye see,
Bring the sea-gull to the sea-wave, bring the sea-weed to
the shore,—

Can I not be trusted, think you, to watch over zealously
Death—which means the birth immortal, just one trifling
effort more?

“Trust me, as the blossoms trust me—as the simple heart
and sweet

Of the gentle maiden trusted who died yesternight alone.
All ye see is but a portion, all ye hear is incomplete ;
Life has wronged you, life has wounded, but the future shall
atone.

To the living full of darkness is the deathland : to the dead
Full of light beyond description, full of splendour passing
speech

—Have you never turned a corner and beheld the sudden red
Fervent light of fiery sunset streaming over sea and beach?

“Full of glory is the deathland to the soul that enters there,
Full of beauty and of marvel and of exquisite repose ;
Full of sweetness for the woman worn with life-long grief and
care,

Full of moonlight for the lover, full of sunlight for the rose.
Full of comfort for the needy, for the weary full of rest,
Full of blessing for the righteous, for the evil full of doom,
For the great a crown immortal, for the good a vision blest,
For the lonely love unending,—that is life beyond the tomb.”

II.
LOVED BEYOND WORDS.

I.
LOVE'S DAWN.

I.
RAPTURE,—AND DESPAIR.

ALL over London now as, weary, I wander
Thy face and eyes I meet.
Here wast thou ; here and here ; and here ; and yonder ;—
Thou hast not left one uninvaded street !

Here did I meet thee once ! Here words were spoken
That thrilled my very heart.—
Time paused and watched us. Yet Time gave no token
How soon and for how long we were to part !

The Spring will come with crocus and with swallow :
The buds will burst their tomb.
May's girlish flowers will wake. The rose will follow,
With Cleopatra's sweetness in her bloom.

Thou wilt not come,—though love's own lute is calling,
Though sweet the love-strain be ?
Thou wilt not come, even when the leaves are falling
And the wild winds and singers seek the sea ?

Thou wilt not come,—for ever and for ever ?
Nor make one London street
Divine as if man's steps had trodden it never
But only, just that once, thy maiden feet ?

As if, when I saw thee, dawned rose-red morning
O'er primal sea and land :
As if Time's lilies waited for the warning
Soft glad first touch of thy creative hand !

For all my past life seems but as a shadow :—
The years till thy foot came
Were winter. Spring with thee turned hill and meadow
Into one golden sheet of blossom-flame.

It is as if till this strange year of wonder
Never one rosebud blew :
As if for thee the very march of thunder
Halted, and lightning's red lips silent grew.

When thou didst come, the blue waves' silver laughter
Rang echoing round thy road :
Spring caught up her green gown and followed after,
And never a stream but far more softly flowed.

Now thou art gone, the wild woods' deep-leaved alleys
Spread forth their gems in vain.
The breeze that seeks thee, searching through the valleys,
Will never laugh its old light laugh again !

The sea's strong heart that loves the rolling thunder
And the sea-bird's white wings
Will pine for thee. The lonely sea will wonder
“Where is my land-bird with the throat that sings ?”

Oh, does God steal with wanton hand and cruel
The gifts his own hand brought ?
Does God bestow on man a priceless jewel,—
Then ravish away the very boon he wrought ?

God gives to Summer's bosom countless flowers ;
Then sends the East wind's breath
To make the labour of months the spoil of hours.
God is the Giver of life,—the Bringer of death.

The stars and suns but for a moment glitter,
And then they pass away
And the far heavens are heaped with golden litter
And full of aimless spirits of fiery spray !

The nations seek God's throne, and bow before him.
Does any of these abide ?
New wide lands in the future will adore him,
As other trustful lands adored,—and died.

And so with love, and thee loved past all reason ;
Madly,—and sweetlier so.
God gives and takes,—and turns the green woods' season
Into the waste white months of songless snow.

II.

LINES WRITTEN ON EASTER SUNDAY, 1883.

IF I went searching far through all the stellar spaces,—
Yea, through the pathless void where God for ever chases
 His wanton comets wild and fair ;
If I passed on from sun to sun, and saw the gilded
Strange regions where new worlds are brought about and
 buidled,—
 I should not find thee there !

Thou art gone past recall.—Christ is not gone. He rises
Each Easter morn anew. His sudden form surprises
 The watchers at the Tomb.
Where is thine Easter morn, O past all restoration
Removed ? What chance for love ? What hope or renova-
 tion ?—
 What chance for wasted dead flower-bloom ?

This is so strange to think !—the utter hopeless distance.
Why even the eye can pierce, and pierce without assistance,
 Through measureless blue leagues of air.
But thou art gone beyond all stars and starlit places !
I may see through long lives star-multitudinous faces,
 Yet never one so fair !

I may live life on life ; yet never never find thee,
Nor know to what unseen strange realm I have resigned thee.
 God hath the power to place
Waste awful leagues of black immeasurable distance
Between us struggling hard with hopeless frail resistance
 And the one wildly yearned-for face.

No distance as of years, no miles that man may number—
Space as of ghostly leagues we traverse in dark slumber
 Between our spirits seems to lie :
Space as the space between our planet and the glimmer
Of yon faint yellow star, now bright, now waxing dimmer,—
 The smallest in the sky.

No Easter morn for Man, till all hopes have arisen !
What is it if one man broke through the black-walled prison ?
 We need far more than this.
The garden needs the rose that died last year, within it, —
The lonely copse must have its brown-winged risen linnet,—
 And my whole soul, love, needs thy kiss.

Then is Christ “risen indeed ;” and never, save in dreaming,
Till the lost leaves of dead dear springs again are gleaming
 Re-risen in splendid vernal air.—
Then will an Easter morn dawn radiant, universal,—
When all men’s sorrows flee in one wide-winged dispersal :
 When I see thy black hair.

When the wild tale of all the sorrow of earth is ended,
Then is Christ “risen indeed,” — and when the heaven is
 blended
 With earth made whole and white :
And when I see again, dear love, thy dark eyes gleaming,—
More beautiful to me than all the star-eyes dreaming
 Of their lost loves the livelong night.

III.

SONNET.

THE INEVITABLE END.

ON one side youth and beauty infinite
 And on the other weariness extreme
 Of life and life's long spirit-torturing dream
 And of the vain wild search for vain delight.
 On one side eyes the sun's own glance made bright
 But on the other eyes through which there gleam
 The eyes of sorrows numberless,—no beam
 Of sun being there by day, nor moon by night.
 When this is so, could any end but one
 Be reached,—could either flee the certain goal,
This—that the weary night should love the sun ;
 That a new deathless day should be begun ;
 That I should love thee, spirit calm and white,
 With all the stormy dark strength of my soul ?

IV.

MY PRAYER.

THIS is my prayer each day : not that the flowers should love
 me,
 Nor further skies of June gleam bountiful above me,
 Nor further seas gleam blue,—
 Not that the scent of may may fill once more the hedges
 And scent of gracious thyme the balmy river-ledges,—
 But that once more my eyes may look on you !
 This is my prayer each day, each night ; that God will let me,
 O loved past poet's speech, before you quite forget me,
 Just see you,—once draw nigh.
 And then when we have met, and once again are parted,
 The same cry goes to God from me half broken-hearted,—
 "God ! let me see her again before I die."

HOW CAN YOU UNDERSTAND?

How can you ever, ever, understand?
 How can I tell you what you are to me?—
 More than the snow-white sea-bird to the sea!
 More than the sweetest white rose to the land!
 I see you,—gaze upon you,—touch your hand;
 Yet what is that to love's infinity!
 What is the little ocean-space we see
 To ocean-wastes by rainbow-arches spanned?
 How can I tell you anything at all?
 You with the great brown gentle bird-like eyes!
 Why should you answer at a lover's call,—
 You whose true lovers are the stars and skies?
 What can I do, O loved one, for your sake
 Save only just to let my whole heart break?

“HOW COULD I HELP IT?”

How could I help it?—Climbing out of hell,
 Can one refuse to love the flower that grows
 Close by the hell-brink? Is not the first rose
 One sees in a green hedge adorable?—
 So sweetness more than I can ever tell
 Crowns thee, and round about thy being flows.
 My love is measured by my former throes
 Of pain: the light by darkness visible.
 It is not much I ask. Pay love's old debt
 With this, Lord God. I only ask to see
 This woman's face: that it may shine on me
 From time to time: that this star may not set:—
 That I may look, for many a sweet day yet,
 Loving, on her, who have, fearless, looked on thee.

VII.
SONNET.

THIS ONE THING.

I HAVE not feared hell's fires, nor feared the pang
Of bitterest suffering, if so I might hear
Her bright girl-laughter ringing silver-clear
As on the day when first we met it rang.
Wilt thou take from me now this one thing dear,
And hush the bird that at my window sang
So sweetly that her note outsoared the clang
Of prison-labour torturing mine ear?
Oh not this one thing?—Take not from the sea
The morning's vast unutterable light!
Take not the first nor last star from the night!
Take not this tender star-love, God, from me!
Stay not the swallow in her Southern flight,
Nor my wings seeking love's deep purity.

VIII.
SONNET.

ONE JUNE-DAY.

O LOVE that hast within thy kingly store
Junes numberless, and canst bestow their bloom
Just where thou willest, raising from their tomb
The flower-white ghosts of Junes that came before
And June-sweet ghosts of flowers that died of yore,—
Filling green aisles of gardens with perfume
And spectral blossom-wings that through the gloom
Sail, flinging marvel round them as they soar:—
O Love that hast within thy kingly hand
All dead June-days and perfect Junes to be,
Wilt thou not spare one sweet June-day to me,
And let my gentle love beside me stand
While step by step the shifting hour-glass' sand
Gives air and bloom and sunlight back to thee?

IX.

SONNET.

TIMELESS WOE.

IF thou shouldst ever sin, O flower of mine,
 And mar the whiteness that I worship so,
 Great tides of sorrow would throughout me flow ;
 Yea, I should marvel at that deed of thine
 As at some solemn desecrated shrine
 Where once the steps of pilgrims used to go.
 Thy fall would work me such exceeding woe
 That in one giant glimpse I should divine
 With an unearthly horror past all speech
 The giant agony that drew God down
 And made him sternly cast aside his crown
 The sin and suffering of the earth to reach.
 I should meet Christ's eyes on the cross, and know
 The central soul-throb of his timeless woe.

X.

SONNET.

THE LOVE-SONG OF THE SEA.

THOU hast so little share or part in me
 And that, God knows, is why I love thee so !
 Just as the great white waves that shoreward go
 After their journey o'er the bitter sea
 Love past all speech the emerald-shining lea
 And the blue river-waves that towards them flow,—
 And love beyond all human words the glow
 Of pink cliff-thyme, and singing of the bee.
 Thou art the river bringing to the deep
 Thoughts of the flowers that by its banks are seen,
 Woven in white amid the entangled green,—
 Dreams of the meadows where the daisies sleep.
 But what gifts, loved one, can I give to thee ?
 Only the love-song of the restless sea !

XI.
SONNET.

SONG'S INSUFFICIENCY.

I CANNOT tell thee why I love thee so,
Or how I love thee. Can the black night tell
The star that lights its heart wherein is hell
Why past all passion it adores the glow
That shoots its golden sweet rays to and fro
Across its murky depths unfathomable?
Can the dark water in the hollow well,
Star-holding, praise the star that stoops so low?—
The night is silent, and the dark deep disk
Of water in the well is silent too.
Nor is there much that even Song can do :
All words are open to the endless risk
That she who hears the words may fail to hear
The actual true heart sighing at her ear !

XII.
SONNET.

THE GIFTLESS DAYS.

THE days whereon I bring no gifts to thee
Seem wasted days ; like days wherethrough there blows
No soft wind laden with the scent of rose,
But only salt strange vapours from the sea.
All gifts I give thee are sweet gifts to me :
When I bring no gift, not mine own heart knows
The stream of strong despair that through it flows,
For it transcends all measuring potency.
It is my grief that I can give no more.
When God had given its crown of stars to night
And to the sea its awful robe of white
And golden raiment to the glittering shore,
What then was left ? This only :—to deplore
That no new gifts could give God new delight.

XIII.

SONNET.

THE FLOWER AND THE NIGHT.

THE flower for but one night of rapture born
Said to the night : " New flowers and nights will be,
But I shall never look again on thee ;
Meet now my flower-gaze fully, without scorn.
To-morrow night thou wilt not be forlorn,
For flowers and stars to all eternity
Within thy fragrant wide arms thou shalt see :—
New loves will rise, as each from thee is torn.

" But this one hour I hold thee, sacred night."—
As said the flower, I murmur, love, to thee.
This once thy dark eyes and dark hair I see,
And with unknown unfathomable delight
Watch the slow fragrant soft hours wing their flight,—
While each hour's pulse involves eternity.

XIV.

FOR THEE AND ME.

THE charm and beauty of this world of things

And all the sunlight of the summer sea
And sweetest notes of every bird that sings

For thee !—

The dark night's sombre face and starless wings

For me !

A future of delight and all men's praise

And laughter ringing out like love's own glee
And happy walks in radiant rose-hung ways

For thee !—

A leaf or two of dark blood-spotted bays

For me !

Bright flowers upon the river-banks, and all

God's love made manifest in bird and bee ;
Love ever close at hand whereon to call

For thee !—

Sorrow that shrouds the wide world like a pall

For me !

Life and the gifts of life,—its fairest flowers

To gather, and its fairest sights to see ;
Its tenderest avenues and deepest bowers

For thee !—

A lonely watch beside thy gate for hours

For me !

A glance or two that haunt me evermore,

That tarry yet though all things else may flee ;
The memory of thy sweet face to adore

For me !—

My whole soul's love till life and death are o'er

For thee !

XV.

O FACE !

LIFT me by thy strange beauty evermore
And gift me nobly as with God's own grace
That towards fair heights of heaven my soul may soar,
O face !

There never yet on loveliest hill or shore,
In old-world lands, or fair undreamed-of place,
Shone beauty such as thine for man to adore,
O face !

Love-gifts round Helen all men came to pour ;
The strong world maddened for her white embrace :
Beauty past speech she had ; yet thou hast more,
O face !

I never dreamed till half my life was o'er
That beauty such as thine God's hand could trace.
Nor was such beauty moulded ever of yore,
O face !

Lift me to lands where Beauty evermore
Is one with Love, and Love is one with grace.
Let me with all my strength of soul adore,
O face !

XVI.
SONNET.
SAFE.

Is the rose safe within its sheath of leaves ?
The sea-bird safe upon the crest of foam ?—
Is the fern safe within its forest-home ?
Is the gold corn-ear safe amid the sheaves ?
Are the blue swallows safe beneath the eaves ?
Is the star safe within the darkling dome
Of night ?—However far the wild winds roam,
Is there an eye which follows and perceives ?—
These things are safe ? Then thou art safe with me.
Safe as the pale star clinging to the night :
Safe as the sea-gull's breast of plummy white
Upon the waters that uprise and flee :
Safe as the lamb Christ folds within his bright
Calm breast is safe for all eternity.

XVII.
SONNET.

THE DEADLIEST PANG.

Was there a thought in God's heart when he died
Upon the cross, that all might be in vain ?
That after all his immemorial pain
The mocking world might fail him and deride ?
That she might nestle by another's side,—
That heedless feet might trample through love's fane,
And other hearts of little worth might gain
The poor frail doubting faint heart of his Bride ?—
Was this, and nothing else, the death-pang true,
The awful darkness darkening sea and land ?
To give without reserve ; although he knew
Whose blow would drive the last nail through his hand.
—It took one little hour to pierce Love through :
It takes the world all time to understand.

II.

LOVE'S GROWTH.

I.

SONNET.

ETERNAL JUNES.

GUARD her for ever for my great love's sake,
Lord God.—Be as a light about her head :
Shield her through solemn hours of darkness dread,
And when the golden summer mornings break.
If one must suffer, let not her heart ache,
But pierce my own strong suffering heart instead !
If sacrificial blood-drops must be shed
Wilt thou not honour me, and my blood take ?—

Thou couldst not give us that one sweet June-day !
Most hard it seems, and ever will seem hard.
But give to her eternal Junes, I pray,
Full of flower-happiness, divine, unmarred
E'en by one petal falling from one spray :
And let me share with thee the right to guard.

II.

SONNET.

RESURRECTION-LIGHT.

Is there a Resurrection for the flowers ?

Have faded lilies seen their Christs arise

Snow-petalled, golden-hearted,—with clear eyes
That frighten Death from out the tangled bowers ?

Have ferns and harebells their triumphant hours

When they too know that Death is he who dies ?

When they revisit the sunlighted skies

And meet again the soft lips of the showers?—

Is there a Resurrection, love, for thee ?

Wilt thou whose eyes are even more divine

Than the sun's first light gladdening the sea-line

Be as the resurrection-sun for me ?

Will Christ speak through thee, and the eyes I meet

First after death be even than his more sweet ?

III., IV.
SONNETS.

LOVE AND LOVE.

I.

I RAISED my arms to heaven in agony
And cried out wildly, "Frail are women fair !
Their love is as a breath of sunlit air
Or white cloud floating o'er a summer sea !
What is her passion of soul compared to me,
Me—for the storm-wreaths nestle in my hair,
And I the inexorable anguish bear
Of one whose love outstrips eternity.
"Her love is measured by the sands of time,—
But mine is as the mountains or the stars :
It snaps all manacles, it laughs at bars,
Nor findeth the high blue airs too sublime.
Her love is dainty as a rose's breath,—
Mine steals his thunder from the lips of death."

II.

I WEEPING said, "What is her love to this ?"
But, smiling, God said, "What is yours to mine ?
I am the sun that lightens the sea-line,
And my lips meet the fragrant morning's kiss.
I die with love for all. Yet all that is
United my one pale thorn-wreath to twine.
Because my love is perfect and divine
It never knows fruition's final bliss.
"What is her love to yours ? Small, it may be.
But yours to mine is as the rippling lake
To the shore-margin where the vast waves break,
Full of song-echoes from the open sea.
Your song is as the singing of a day :—
My song laughs golden-haired when Time turns grey."

V.

SONNET.

"THIS CHANGELESS GRACE."

IF thou must ever come, then pass away,
 Like the sad ending of a dream too sweet
 For treading therein with cold wakeful feet—
 A dream that vanishes when morning grey
 Peers in the chilly loveless face of day
 And summons him from his forlorn retreat
 Long hours of pain and labour to repeat—
 If thou must thus the laws of time obey,
 Yet is it not unalterably good
 That once at least in life I have seen thy face,
 Once touched thy hand, and once beside thee stood?
 Have I not won at least this changeless grace
 That in the heart of him who loved and sang
 Thou hast left love endless,—and an endless pang?

VI.

SONNET.

LIFE'S BEST DEED.

THINK gently of me, if the day should come
 When thou (ah God, the sorrow!) hast to go.
 Think gently of me when the blossoms blow:
 Think gently of me when the lilac-bloom
 Covers Spring's brow with many a purple plume:
 Think gently of me when the wintry snow
 Shrouds the wild wold where ever to and fro
 The grim and ceaseless large mist-spectres loom.
 Think gently of me, if the day should dawn
 When thou must (God, the sorrow!) pass from sight:
 Think how thy passing makes the whole world night:
 I shall be very tired, when thou art gone.
 Think gently,—even tenderly,—of me:
 Far my life's best deed was my love of thee.

VII.

WEARY.

YES : I am weary indeed. But thou,—thou art not weary.
What hath thy soul to do with grey thoughts dim and dreary ?

Thou art the morning's rose !

Long after I am dead, the flowers will gather round thee :
But still my glory is that mine the first hand crowned thee
With love no heart else knows.

This is my glory and gift ; that I of all men brought thee
The deepest truest love, and with sweet singing sought thee
And gifts through long pain won.

This is my crown ; to know that though love's sword was
keener
Than grief's, I met its point with heart and glance serener
Than flowers that meet the sun.

VIII.

SONNET.

STAR-MEETINGS.

I KEPT account of all the times we met,—
Just as a prisoner watching through his bars
Might keep account of the few friendly stars
On which each night his longing eyes were set.
And each star-meeting was an endless debt
To God and Fate for infinite delight :—
Those sweet star-meetings ! few and soft and bright
Upon life's background carved in starless jet.
But now it may be we may oftener meet.—
The thought thrills through me, just as if there went
Along that prisoner's soul a large content
And sudden sense of something strangely sweet
When, free at last, outside his prison-door
He saw his five stars lost in millions more.

IX.

“IF SO THINE EYES WOULD NOT FORSAKE
THE DREAM!”

I DREAMED of thee last night.—All night thine eyes before
me

Shone strangely clear and sweet, and strange delight flowed
o'er me

In rippling wave on wave.

All night I dreamed of thee : and dreamed in tenderest
fashion

Of the great boon of death that crowns a perfect passion
And of large light that gleams beyond the grave.

How gladly would I cease the feverish pain of living,
If only thy sweet eyes might ever be forthgiving

The same soul-maddening gleam :

How gladly would I let the one night's dream continue
Into the dream of death, if therein I could win you,—
If so thine eyes would not forsake the dream !

X.

SONNET.

A DREAM.

“SINCE thou hast loved with love so wild and sweet
That life and time have faded quite away,

And thou hast learned to count the hours of day
By love's heart's inner and triumphant beat
At the dear coming of thy lady's feet ;

Since, when she is not with thee, dark and grey
Is all the world—thy service to repay

And thy soul's strong forlorn desire to meet,

I send a dream :” even so the Love-god said.

Then I was 'ware that round about my bed
Crowded dim forms of angels and of men,

And the next world shone clear as in a glass.—
They bowed before my might of love and pain,
And Death, bare-headed, moved to let me pass.

XI.

EACH NIGHT.

EACH night I think : "To-day has brought me one day nearer
To seeing thee again,"—and still the thought grows clearer
The sadder that it grows.

For if again in life mine eyes should find thee never,
Each day brings nearer death ; and, after death, for ever
With happier waves the heart's deep love-song flows.

Yes : after death strange stars that mocked us in our life-time
Sail within reach, and even the great sea's stormy strife-time
Sinks to superb repose.

And God whose hand can make the loveliest flower diviner,
Artist unequalled yet, omnipotent designer,
Creates for love an unattempted rose.

XII.

LOVE'S SORROW.

THIS love has changed my life. But would I rather have it?
If Fate upon my soul in red lines must engrave it

Shall I still thankful be?

The love that brings us pain, and yearning past expression,
Is this in spite of all, this perilous possession,
A gift to cling to through eternity?

I think so.—When love's world first opens out before us,
When first its sweet winds sing and golden stars shine o'er us,
Its flowers are so divine

We never never dream of what shall follow after :
We only hear the wind's caressing lovely laughter ;
We see no white crests on the far sea-line.

Then, when the dark days come, and all the flowers are faded,
And the green thickets, dense with leafage once, invaded
By the bleak keen wind's breath,

We have the golden thought of summer days to cling to,
And love's old image deep within the heart to sing to,
Hurling song's utterance in the teeth of death.

Yes. Love brings endless pain,—an infinite sword-anguish.
Yet better far to love than through dull life to languish
Devoid of love and pain.

So, sweet, though love for thee has brought me pain exceeding
Yet from my heart's true depths, though love therein lies
bleeding,
I cry, "Love's sorrow is immortal gain."

III.

LOVE'S MATURITY.

I., II.

SPRING MESSAGES.

I.

AFTER LONG MONTHS.

STRAIGHT from the dark of months thy sweet eyes flashed, and
sought me ;
The light of vanished suns and former stars they brought me,
And light of their own flame :—
And from them all the sense of Spring-tide crocus-hearted
Along my weary soul, swift, on a sudden, darted ;
And with thy voice the lark's new love-song came.

Thou wast the spirit of Spring.—The sense of grassy meadows
And merry leaves that dance and balmier twilight shadows
Was born along with thee.
All blossoms are not dead,—for thou art living, lady!
So once again the sun will through the foliage shady
Strike his long arrows, lighting flower and tree.

Thou art alive. By this I know that Spring will follow :
Now hyacinths will bloom, and hill and copse and hollow
Will gleam with fiery gold.

The silent heart of Spring that for thy mandate waited
Will break to flower at last—Spring tortured and belated,
Hiding his ferns and flowers in fold on fold.

Thou hast the spirit of Spring and Summer's heart within
thee :

And who would love and hold, and worship thee, and win
thee,

Must meet the Spring's own eyes
Fearless, and Summer's eyes,—and laugh for very pleasure
When the bright fields spread out their limitless gold treasure
Beneath the cloudless smile of stormless skies.

I know that Winter now has passed away before thee.

The very heart of May will worship and adore thee

And kiss thine hands ere long.—

The heart of all the world will throb with love and gladness,
And silver streams will seek with silver-voiced sweet madness
To catch the echo of thy pure heart's song.

And once again I lift the lyre the cold had frozen,
And laugh to think how soon of all flowers thou the chosen

Wilt put the flowers to scorn.

When thou dost call on Love he wakes and follows after :

In thine I hear the ring of very June's own laughter :

Thine eyes are lovelier than a summer morn.

II.

THY FACE.

AMONG the weary crowd of weary common faces
I linger,—and I search through flowerless dreary places
 Seeking amid the throng
One vision worth a thought. Pale Death and Sorrow meet
 me :

Death sues me for a wreath, and Sorrow doth entreat me
 To crown her wild-haired forehead with a song.

Then I take up mine harp, and sing of Death and Sorrow,—
Of how the sweetest things are saddest things to-morrow ;
 How pain fills every place ;
How woe has set its hand upon our city's features ;
How agony is grooved on brows of human creatures ;—
 Then on a sudden, lady, lo ! thy face.

III.

PEACE.

WILL God at last give me this one sweet thing?—
That thy young lips should touch the lips that sing !

That thy young heart should wake a song in me
More glad than morning's to the dark cold sea ?

If thou canst love me, let thy love abide
Unchanged for ever. Be my light and guide !

But give no love that thou wilt take away.
Turn not the sea's whole blue to waste wild grey !

O love of loves, my very singing dies
Before the strange sweet light that fills thine eyes.

When sweet love triumphs, even song must cease :
Fame is song's guerdon, but love's gift is peace.

IV., V., VI.
SONNETS.

I.

LOVE, AND DREAMS OF LOVE.

THROUGH years on years a man dreamed dreams on dreams
Of love.—The flowers of every spring were fair,
And love-thoughts glistened through the summer air
And mingled with the lilies on the streams
And wove gold circlets from the starry beams :—
Slow step by step Love's marble palace-stair
The man climbed, and it rang with laughter rare,
And sweet eyes met his own with answering gleams.
At last he reached the central palace-room,
And lo ! a woman's form he there descried.
She rose to meet him. In that fragrant gloom,
Dream following dream, a whole life's love-thoughts died.
Love's voice to every dream of love spake doom,
And the soul found its all-sufficient Bride.

II.

SWEETER.

O LOVE, love, never turn away thy face !
If I am faithful—if the stormy sea
Gives its wild strength and wilder song to thee,
Hold thou, sweet river, full of light and grace,
River whose tides green thymy shores embrace,
Hold thou for ever firm of heart to me !
If my fierce waves defy eternity,
Within those waves thy soft blue waters place.
I tire of images—I tire of song—
Song leads to love, and love bestows at last
Not fame but rest. Sweeter it is to me
The soft love-light within thine eyes to see
Than all old triumphs won by labour strong,
All laurel-crowns or dream-crowns of my past.

III.

LOVE'S FINAL POWERS.

THERE are strong powers of love that early years
Know little of.—All added force of being
Gives love new deeper tenderer eyes for seeing,
And love wins sweetness from a lifetime's tears.
All pangs and hopes and joys and trembling fears
Add strength to love. As life's black darkness grows,
Love's firmer step through that murk darkness goes,
And, dauntless, over the grave's brink Love peers.

There are strange powers of love that youthful days
Know little of. There is a love beside
Whose strength the passion of the ocean wide
Is like the ripples whispering in blue bays :
A love beside whose strength death's fingers wild
Are weak as pink soft fingers of a child.

VII.

THE ONLY DEATH.

I.

WHEN thou didst speak of death, it seemed to me
The only death would be the loss of thee.

It is not death that hurts, nor wounds nor pain ;
This would be death—to see no more again

Thine eyes. There is no other death for me
Now left, O loved one, than the loss of thee.

II.

For I have so completely lost in thine
My life, that now it seemeth no more mine

But just a life that floweth, love, through thee,
As the warm land-stream mingleth with the sea.

Thou art my life ; and life means now to me
The life, the beauty, and the love of thee.

VIII.

A VISION.

I SAW a company whom God had crowned.—

They held the post of danger through the day,
And died at night upon the blood-stained ground,
And over them the moon soared gaunt and grey
And the wild leaves fled past with wailing sound :

But now, in heaven, their pain had passed away,
And they were crowned and victors. Yet their eyes
Were full of tears. They knew not why there rang
Along the serried armies of the skies

So vast a shout. Their joy was like a pang,
So unexpected was it. Wild surprise

Smote through their dumb hearts as the angels sang
“Glory to these, who held the one chief post
And held it to the end,—and died at night
And won the battle for the whole great host,
Yet saw no victory when their souls took flight
Across the red-stained meadows.” Too engrossed

With their own task to watch the waning light
They tarried till the end,—till each one fell

Prone at his post. Now unto each God says :
“Soul, *thou* didst win the fight. Thou hast done well.”

And, as each hears with wonder in his gaze,
Each answers, suffering having cast out pride :
“Lord, I did nought. I only loved and died.”

IX.

“YET MORE SWEET.”

LET me just watch thine eyes. If nothing more,
Yet let this one thing be !
Is it forbidden to the throbbing shore
To watch the clear-eyed sea ?

May not the green woods, dark and full of woe,
Watch, once, their bright birds' flight ?—
Oh let me love thee, watch thee, guard thee, so :
As guards its stars the night.

Be thou one star within my dreary night ;
One sweet wave on my sea ;
One woman with superb eyes full of light,
Light ever turned on me !

If all the world of women came and fell
One by one at my feet
And offered me strange gifts too sweet to tell,
It would be yet more sweet,

O love, to me to watch thy clear brown eyes
(Though no gift else were ours !)
Than to possess all hearts beneath the skies,
And win those hearts' best flowers !

X.

ART AND LOVE.

I USED to love fair Art, whose clear voice rings
 Along the mountain-side.
I met her by blue streams and forest-springs :
 I loved her like a bride.

The sunsets held her, and the morning's gold
 Circled her peerless hair :
Deep fern and heather draped the summer wold,
 And buoyant Art was there.

And in sweet music Art's sweet spirit spoke ;
 And over the wild sea
Her face like sudden lustrous morning broke
 Triumphant upon me.

So all my youth was passed. I worshipped her,
 Fair Art, with love supreme :
I brought her all my hopes, and I laid bare
 Before her every dream.

Art was my goddess. For her sake I sighed :
 Her realms my spirit sought.
I rested at her feet, and would have died
 To please the queen in aught.

But now Art's form doth change into the form
 That I love better still.
Art's marble hand is cold, but thine is warm :
 Art's stern touch cannot thrill.

Thy young touch thrills me, and thy deep brown eyes
 Make me forget to sing
Aught else. So sacred depths of summer skies
 Drown out the dreams of spring.

I have loved Art with love beyond all speech,
 Have laboured in her fane,—
Have sought her secret inmost heart to reach,
 Her deepest soul to gain.

But now I bring my deepest love of Art
 And give that love to thee.
Lo ! she and I are strangers and must part :
 New sails are on the sea !

There are fair crowns of labour and of birth ;
 Let this my one crown be—
I loved Art best of all things upon earth,
 Yet loved Art less than thee !

XI.

GOD'S YEARNING.

“BECAUSE I, being God, am deathless King
Of all men born,
Let the world's measureless wild sorrow bring
Its every thorn.

“Because I am so strong that even the wings
Of lightning fail
Before me, let me help the humblest things,—
A rosebud pale.

“Because I have the godlike power to shun
Death's sombre night,
Let me the sunbright pass beyond the sun,
Me, lord of light.

“Because, O world, thou hatest me indeed
And hate is loss,
Let me for thy sweet erring strange sake bleed
Upon the cross.

“O world, thine eyes are full of wandering light :
I love to see
The glory in thine eyes that shall wax bright
And full of me,

“When in the end the final work is done
And, one far morn,
Thy fields and gardens smile beneath the sun
Without one thorn.

“That thou, world, mayest be saved, let me be lost :
That thou mayest rise,
Let me the sinless pay sin’s fullest cost
Before thine eyes.

“O world, sweet world, the very heart of God
Yearns over thee !
Wild anguish storms God’s cloudless vast abode,
Eternity.

“Wild love and anguish storm the heart divine :
O world forlorn,
I kiss the hands that round my forehead twine
Thorn upon thorn.”

XII.

A DREAM.

I DREAMED I followed thee across the stars ;
Thy sweet face beckoned me :
Through strange cloud-masses, bursting vaporous bars,
My spirit followed thee.

The vast and desolate and treeless track
Seemed just as nothing then ;
Nought, if my spirit could but win thee back
And hold thee once again.

Stars faded into gloom, and new stars rose
Upon my weary sight :
Yet still I followed,—followed to the close
Of the wild realms of night.

And then I found thee,—in a land divine,
Unknown, unseen, untrod ;
And clasped at length thy soul, and sealed it mine
Before the throne of God.

“LOVED BEYOND WORDS.”

ETERNAL boyhood deepens day by day
 As the heart older grows :
 The man who loves a rose
 Is ever immortal, though the hair wax grey.

The man who loveth thee,
 O thou most sweet incarnate spirit of Spring,
 Becomes a strong and age-defying king
 Of heaven and earth and sea.

I never shall find words in which to say
 (That is my one despair !)
 How past all sweet praise fair
 Thou art to me,—and lovelier day by day.

I never shall find song
 Divine enough, my beautiful, for thee.
 When we stand close beside a white may-tree
 Words do the sweet bloom wrong.

Song, once I thought, could never fail to show
 The fervent heart within :
 Yet, God knows, it seems sin
 Almost to sing of thee—I love thee so !

My beautiful, my queen,
 My sweetest of all sweet things upon earth,—
 My sovereign woman with the silver mirth,
 The deep glance and serene,—

The harp falls from my hand ! God only knows
 (The God who gave to me
 To love and look on thee)
 How my whole soul upon thee doth repose.

XIV.

JACOB AND RACHEL.

As Jacob served seven years
For dark-eyed Rachel, and the long years seemed
Nought for the love he bare her as they gleamed
Past, full of spring's wild tears
And summer's passion,—so it seems to me
That I have, through strange suffering, served for thee
Not seven years as decreed
But seventy times seven years, and more indeed !

LOVE AND ART.

HELP thou me with my Art !
That thus the beauty which I worship so
May flush the world's sad cheeks with summer glow
And comfort many a heart.

Clear is our duty high.
Thou hast the gift of beauty ; I can sing ;
We have to bless the wintry world with spring
And sunlight, thou and I.

Help me the world to teach.
Teach me all lessons gracious with thine eyes :
Be ever, love, the most divine surprise
That e'er moved songful speech.

Teach me love's secrets deep.
That I may move the world, inspire thou me
And fill my spirit with the sense of thee
Till sweet thoughts make me weep.

Love must not make us blind.
We have to help the world and make it glad :
Thou by thy beauty, I by song must add
New riches to mankind.

Just gaze at me, and I
Will sing so that the world must gaze at thee
And catch the passionate refrain from me,
Prolong it when I die.

XVI.

“ACROSS THE STARS.”

THOUGH thou art far away
Yet, sweetheart, I can pray
For thee.—No leagues of thunder-traversed air
Can bar the passage of the wings of prayer.

Through heights of stormy cloud
Love sweeps, and cries aloud :
Lo ! at his voice the distance fades, and dim
Mist-armies part before the breath of him.

I have no strength nor power,
My tender one white flower,
To hold thee safe. The Power that sways the sea
Will for a season take the charge from me.

The Power that holds the sky
Though my arms be not nigh
Will see that through thine eyes no sad thoughts gleam
But only thine own soul's divine sunbeam.

God bless and keep thee, dear !
Love whisper in thine ear !—
Hope mocks at distance, snaps all chains and bars,
And pure love reaches thee across the stars !

XVII.

A QUEEN'S BOUNTIES.

BECAUSE no woman has the power
To give me infinite and cureless pain
As thou canst, let me through thy sweetness gain
New gladness, hour by hour !

Bear graciously thy queenly head.
Because no living woman has the right
To pain me as thou may'st, give me delight
Unspeakable instead.

Thou, royal, hast a right supreme :—
Use it with royal perfect tenderness ;
To help and comfort, and to raise and bless ;
Be just God's own sunbeam.

Because a single look of thine
Can pain or gladden me beyond all speech,
Give me ten thousand looks,—and see that each
Be like the first : divine.

XVIII.

THE SUPREME LOVE.

AFFECTIONS, passions, many there may be
In the soul's life. But one
Great love brings absolute fierce sovereignty :
Stars tremble at the sun.

The soul lives through long lives, and many flowers
It gathers by the way.
But through all life's interminable hours
It loves but once, I say.

The great love gathers in its wide embrace
Affections, passions all.
Where there were many, now shines but one face :
The old love-temples fall.

This is the wonder of surpassing love ;
Its marvel and its doom.
A sudden wind sweeps grimly from above
And leaves one flower in bloom :

One, only one. Man rises to his height
Of being when he knows
That love for one alone can flood life's night
With the great stars' repose.

I have not loved, nor shall I love again,
While stars still kiss the sea,
With gleam of joy, or chance of awful pain,
Sweetheart, as I love thee.

XIX.

A PRAYER FOR THE FUTURE.

THAT thou wilt faithful be, and full of love and sweetness
That thou wilt let fair Love to exquisite completeness

Round off our marriage-song,

I pray. I pray that through the years that stretch before us
God's sun may ever shine with tenderer bounty o'er us ;

I pray that my love's strength may make thee strong.

I pray that every day, as day past day goes gliding,
I may be at thy side with gentlest love and guiding,

With tenderest voice and heart,—

Bestowing upon thee the love that I have lavished
On stars and flowers and waves, bright-hearted things soon
ravished

Away by time's hand as the years depart.

I pray that thou mayest know—that God himself may teach
thee—

How vast a fight I fought to win thee, love, and reach thee ;
How awful was the strain.

I pray that thou mayest know that if my soul hath won thee
The power that cast its spell around thine heart and on thee
Was just the power of love and desperate pain :—

The power that moves the stars,—that reaches God and binds
him ;

Yea, in the farthest bower of mistiest heaven it finds him
And brings him to our side :

The power that shone through Christ when on the blood-
stained gibbet

He hung for hours, that love might once for all exhibit
Its deathless kingdom through the man who died.

And oh that I may be for ever and for ever
Thy patient lover true—lose heart and sweet hope never—
For this, O love, I pray :

That I may win thine heart so utterly and sweetly
That thou mayest never need, content in me completely,
To turn, e'en for one hour, thine eyes away.

That I may faithful be—to death if it be needed :
'That ever by thy heart my love-voice may be heeded
I pray,—that I may be
Each morning more in love, and every morning truer,
Even as the sky to God is every morning bluer
And bluer all the strange depths of the sea.

THY WOMANHOOD.

AND dost thou think that I am blind to this—
 That half thine heart I cannot see ?
 That thou shouldst just a little love is bliss :
 Yet much is hidden, woe is me !

Thy glorious woman-heart all unrevealed
 Waits,—waits in silence soft and deep.
 Thy soul as yet is like a form concealed
 And wrapped in robes of magic sleep.

Thy perfect soul is what I long to win :
 Thy perfect woman-heart indeed.
 Ope thy soul's gates that Love may enter in ;
 To song the entrance-right concede.

Give me thy future. Lovely as thou art,
 Yet lovelier thou wilt one day be.
 I dream of this, as Spring's enamoured heart
 Dreams of the summer stars and sea.

As Spring's heart dreams of unarisen flowers
 And of soft summer-joys unseen
 And of love-laughter ringing through deep bowers
 As yet but touched by tenderest green,

So I dream softly, but with high delight
 —Delight that fills with stars my gloom—
 Of what thou wilt be,—even yet more bright
 One day, and full of softer bloom.

XXI.

LOVE'S SILENCE.

THERE is a love so deep it travels far
Beyond the reach of words. E'en love-songs jar
 When the great depths are stirred.
The blue vast heaven responds to God who made
Its depths profound of awful light and shade
 Sometimes without one word.

When heaven is full of love, no thunders leap
Along the heights of the abysmal steep :
 Nay ! all is silent then.
There is a love so full of silent peace
That even solemn stately love-chants cease
 Or are not heard of men.

O love, be with me in my silent hours
And gather sweeter than the old song-flowers
 With sympathy that knows
That, as a soul may be too glad to pray,
So even thus to love there comes a day
 When the gold song-gates close.

When love is calm, and both our hearts at rest,
When love hath ceased its weary agelong quest,
 We shall not need song's aid.—
When souls are one with God's high purpose, prayer
Ceases. The strong stars sweep through silent air
 Voiceless, and unafraid.

God looks not for petitions from the rose,
Nor from the tameless ocean-wave. He knows
 Their silence is his praise.
The loudest prayers in hell, not heaven, are heard :
Often the mightiest love can find no word,
 The sweetest love no lays.

In silence countless human hearts adore.
Not in the lightning's flash, the thunder's roar,
 Is God named King of kings.
His glory rests upon the mountain-height :
His strength is in the great sun's silent light,
 The eagle's silent wings.

In 'silence, with no pause nor resting-place,
Our prayerless planet whirls through endless space ;
 Of God's will it is part.
The souls who pray on to the very end
Are those who fail in perfect love to blend
 With the Eternal's heart.

The souls who sob and pray are incomplete.
The holy calm of perfect love is sweet :
 Its silence is sublime.
When lovers rest beside the river's flow
They hear the bee's wings as they come and go
 Among the tufts of thyme.

They hear the river's courtship of the reeds :
They hear the proud lark chanting of his deeds
 Of valour to the sky :
They hear the redbreast singing in the hedge :
They hear the west wind woo the slender sedge :
 They hear the grass-blade sigh.

Speech is not needed when the souls are one,
Nor battle-cry, when all the strife is done

(Yet ah ! the strife was long).

O love, come closer than song's tenderest word,
Closer than music ! When no songs are heard,

Be still the soul of song.

XXII.

OUT OF SIGHT OF LAND.

FROM shore to shore
Far as the loneliest searching eye can ache
Billows that climb and burst, billows that roar ;
Billows without one break.

If ever we
Reach a new land of peace, of peace divine,
The first green hills will rise beyond the sea,
Beyond the waste of brine.

Far out we sail :
Far out of eyeshot of the former land.
Round us the wandering white-winged sea-birds wail,
A lonely weird strange band.

They know not, these,
The calm and beauty of the summer shore ;
The light and laughter of the leafy trees ;
The fragrance of the pine-wood floor.

No dales are theirs
Thyme-scented, gentle, full of chant of bees :
Only the wild hoarse singing of the airs,
The desolate trumpet of the seas.

Yet triumph high
They feel, those white-winged birds far out at sea.
The green wave's curve is tenderer to the eye
Sometimes than gleam of grass or tree.

And we can share
Those sea-birds' triumph and their wild delight,
Feeling around their plumes the lonely air
And the sweet lonely night.

When trees and flowers
Shine once more on us, they will be quite new,
And other than the old forsaken bowers
Will edge the undreamed-of blue.

Our only hope
(What hope for love but this?) is just to steer,
While grim sea-breezes rock the quivering rope,
Past reach of eye or ear.

Then when the hills
Rise, faintly glittering on another shore
That unimagined other sunshine fills,—
On whose white cliffs new billows roar,—

With tearful eyes
We shall mark forest-deeps loom forth again
And with a sudden thrilling of surprise
See summer flowers, and without pain.

But out of sight
Of trees and flowers and land to-day are we :
Above us the great star-hung arch of night ;
Round us the grey-green wastes of sea.

XXIII.

MUTUAL LOVE.

THE strength of man first storms the heart :
But in the end the woman gives as well.

Man's love first plays its urgent part ;
Man's passion changes earth to heaven or hell.

First man pursues. With strength he seeks :
For months he deems that no response is there.

Then, on a sudden, rose-red cheeks !—
He laughs, and kisses lips and throat and hair.

This is love's reciprocity divine.

Man loves,—and thinks the woman cold :
But her pure heart is learning line by line
Love-lore it may not yet unfold.

Wait. Let the love-god slowly win the heart.
One day the soft eyes full of tears
Will speak a message past the reach of Art ;
Yet he may understand who hears.

XXIV.

LOVE'S RECOMPENSE.

WHAT would I win? Why this—that she should traverse slowly
Mead after mead of love, then pass from meadows lowly
To wind-swept hills divine.

I'd teach the lore of love to her pure heart so meetly
That it should answer ever, and past expression sweetly :
I'd teach the art of great love, line by line !

What recompense have I for endless patient session
Thus at the gate of love,—for endless strong repression
That makes the man's heart groan?
This—that the sweetest heart God ever chose to fashion
Should in the end with deep unalterable passion
Love me eternally, and me alone.

“THE PAIN OF GOD.”

OF old God rested 'mid the heavenly flowers
 Far from all sounds and sights of man's despair :
 The blue sky filled with light the deathless bowers
 And perfect peace was there.

All pure delights were present to his hand :
 The stars at night were ministers sublime :
 Joy flooded like a stream the painless land
 That took no heed of time.

Far-off man toiled amid the nether gloom,
 And woman wept, and death ruled bitterly.
 Ruin and dread destruction were man's doom ;
 To love, and then to die.

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But Love arose and said, “ While one man sighs,
 Shall I contented dwell beyond the gloom ?
 While sorrow walks the earth with burning eyes,
 Or shudders at hope's tomb ? ”

Strong Love stooped downward to the lowest hell,
 And made the deepest agony divine.
 Love said, “ With even the saddest it is well
 Now, for their pain is mine.”

And so it came to pass that man arose
 And blossoms bloomed upon the paths he trod :
 Yet all his joy (though man forgets) he owes
 To the deep pain of God.

XXVI.

MAN'S OVERTHROW.

STRAIGHT through the strongest heart God's arrow goes
At God's unerring will.
The strongest spirit knows
Deepest how God can make alive or kill.

Man stands erect and challenges the Lord
With fiery soul to fight.
But lo! God's sudden sword
Pierces his spirit in the midmost night.

In the deep dreary moonless midnight gloom
Beside the couch One stands :
Not empty is the room :
The darkness parts at touch of unseen hands :

And God says, "Thou wast strong and full of fire
And valiant as the sea ;
I know thine heart's desire ;
If I reject thy longing, what of thee?"

Then, face to face with the eternal Thought,
With not one star to aid,
Man feels himself as nought :
The fieriest spirit is the most afraid.

The strongest spirit is exposed the most
To the stern swordlike Thought,
And soonest of the host
Of rebels to supreme repentance brought.

For on his strength God's strength with fiery shock
Impinges, and he cries
"I am smitten as by a rock
Hurled from the watchful hollows of the skies!"

The strength of God seeks out the strongest soul
To combat,—and it breaks
The strongest, and makes whole
Soonest the heart whose very roots it shakes.

XXVII.

A CHANGE OF THOUGHT.

I THOUGHT of old that England needed not
The hand of Christ to aid :
That tower and ferny grot
And rose-hung sunny spot
Or English quiet soft-leaved woodland glade

Needed no help from him, the great dead Jew.—
I said it, as I sang :
I sang of waves of blue
And English sunsets' hue
And how the wild winds round our white cliffs rang.

I thought our English potency supreme.
"No Christ," I said, "we need :
His gospel is a dream,
An old-world dying gleam ;
Each soul can suffer, and each heart can bleed.

"Why seek in Eastern skies a nobler light
Than falls on Windermere
Or Ulleswater by night,
Or our long coast-line bright
When through the heaven our harvest-moon doth steer ?

“ Why seek in Eastern lands for singers higher
Than Wordsworth or than Keats?
Had David Shelley’s lyre
Or Byron’s strength and fire?
With its own music-pulse the land’s heart beats.”

But now I change the spirit of my song.
The Helper whom we need,
Patient, eternal, strong,
The slayer of all wrong,
Is Christ I doubt not, the Lord Christ indeed.

Of lands we need him most. And as for me,
Lord Christ, the man who said
“ We have no need of thee,”
Of all men verily
I need thee most !—I most require thine aid !

ENVOI.

“NEVER FAREWELL TO THEE!”

NEVER farewell. Though life change round about us,
Never farewell to thee !
The summers pass. The new spring days without us
Win the same ecstasy.

Life yields to death, and death brings new life bearing
New gifts that time may take.
Leaf saith to leaf farewell. With sighs despairing
Flower-hearts and men's hearts break.

Death seems to rule, and pain with treading deadly
Tramps through the ill-fated throng.
The world seems just one sorrowful vast medley
Of wrath and grief and wrong.

“Farewell!” “farewell!” saith one heart to another ;
The sad cry fills the air.
“Farewell!” saith love to love, saith son to mother :
This world's gift is despair.

Yet shudder not. Despair shall not dismay us ;
Love's strength shall more abound.
If Love be guide, the wild years shall obey us,
Flower-wreathed or thunder-crowned.

Let farewell ring throughout the world—I care not,
If thou art true to me.
I meet the gaze of death, yet I despair not :
Never farewell to thee !

BOOK III.

THE SONG OF RIPER
MANHOOD.

THE ETERNAL LIFE.

THIS is the eternal life. All spheres are one :
The sphere of our own vast monarchal sun
And all the suns of space ;
The sphere of this world's harebells, and the sphere
Of yonder gold-brown runnel tinkling clear
Through pebbly shoals and bays.

The eternal life impinges upon this.
The red-lipped maid and lover, when they kiss,
Join lips in heaven, not here :
The murderer, poisoning high his bloody brand,
Stabs deep his victim in another land
Than this. Hell's gates are near.

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All things that here seem local and apart
Unite their powers in one surpassing Art
Which circles strong and weak
When life climbs upward to a higher range.
The sculptor's work becomes a living strange
New form. The dead eyes speak.

The poet hears the music of his strain
As outward chords of music ; and, again,
The great composer hears
The passionate torrent of unspoken speech
Which, latent in his notes, he could not reach
Nor utter to our ears.

The painter sees the hills and dales he sought
Not now mere subjects of pictorial thought,
Mere panoramic things ;
He marks the actual height of azure air
Which on his canvas was exceeding fair,—
Each actual oak-branch swings.

The silver rivulets he painted leap
Now down an actual craggy pine-clothed steep ;
The blue waves that he limned
Dance underneath true sunlight, and the sky,
Real, hears real larches and real aspens sigh ;
The stars flash out undimmed.

He painted Cleopatra ? Lo ! she stands—
With laughing eyes and with beseeching hands
She lures him to her side.
Among the women of his artist's dream
He now may choose that one whose glances gleam
Most tenderly, for bride.

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Sphere touches sphere. They mingle and collide.
Hell's arches gloom and threaten by the side
Of heaven's doors all aglow.
The man who sits beside us, it may be,
Is fire-tossed on the intolerable sea
Of hell, could we but know.

A darkness not of night, unlit by stars,
Void of the moon—a gloom which no sound jars
(Harsh sounds were welcome there !)
Wraps all the lonely weary wastes of earth
For some, doomed spirits from their very birth,
The bond-slaves of despair.

For others the whole earth is glad and sweet.
 With the spring's buoyant pulse their pulses beat ;
 Their endless life is won :
 This world to them is heaven, for they create
 In this dark world of wretchedness and hate
 Light fairer than the sun.

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And so with God. Behind the lying sphere
 Of the unjust grim god who rules us here
 Another Godhead dwells :
 A God whose eyes can pierce beyond the feasts
 Of Churches,—past the idols of the priests,
 Past all their heavens and hells.

To him the poets, one by one, appeal.
 When shines the sunlight of his face, they feel
 That hell's flame dies away :
 That darkling lands wherever chaos reigned,
 Where captives in murk dungeons pined and plained,
 Are crimsoned with the day.

To him, past God and God, the poets reach.
 Him they believe in ; him their hearts beseech ;
 His eyes and his alone
 They seek. Their spirits search behind the stars,
 Making away with every mist that bars
 The sky-way to his throne.

All souls who come between they hurl aside,
 Whether they be by centuries deified
 Or for one instant strong.
 The same swift inspiration through them flows
 Whence Jewish prophets' fiery speech arose
 And David's eager song.

Behind the souls that hate, the Gods that slay,
Ephemeral dying Gods of yesterday

Whose thrones one moment gleam,
The changeless just Eternal One abides :
And past him all the ages' movement glides
Like an unending dream.

THE ACTIVE DEAD.

THE dead work for our good with love beyond
 The love they here attained :
Their spirits bid our spirits not despond ;
 They bid us climb the hill-tops they have gained.

They, could they speak to us, would evermore
 Forbid our souls to weep :
They would command our hearts and thoughts to soar ;
 They would awaken us from hopeless sleep.

They rest.—Yes, they have passed away from strife,
 Away from painful care :
But yet they work for us, as through their life
 They worked. They follow us with love more rare.

They, who have ever helped, know better now
 What high gifts to bestow :
They breathe repose upon the weary brow ;
 At night their solemn whispers come and go.

And they are with us in the summer days ;
 They speak in our still hours :
Though wondrous scenes are bursting on their gaze
 They never can forget earth's simple flowers.

Our hyacinths still bloom within their hearts ;
 Our snowdrops still are white :
And still our various-blossomed June imparts
 Joy to their day and fragrance to their night.

They rest. But this their rest—to love us more,
 To guard us till we meet :
The hearts whose loss our faithless souls deplore
 Were never quite so close, nor half so sweet.

THE SOUL OF CHANGE.

ALL passes.—Gleams the corn-field golden-brown :
To-morrow the bright ears are trampled down
 By blood-stained hoofs and wheels.
The seasons pass ; the long months flit away.
Fair June's form vanishes. November grey
 Is close upon her heels.

Our joys and sorrows vanish.—We ascend
The gaunt hill-side. We think our labours end
 When the first peak is won.
Peak behind peak the distant prospect glows—
Crag beyond crag. The rising stars disclose
 How little yet is done.

Beauty of form and face fades swift away.
The black hair soon is streaked with silver-grey :
 The dimpled cheeks grow thin :
The darkening hollows underneath the eyes
Show how pale beauty from life's temple flies
 When death comes shivering in.

The very sea itself shall change and pass.
There shall be golden flowers and emerald grass
 Where now the white waves rage.
Continuous movement surges through the whole
Of things,—the pulse as of a restless Soul
 That grows from age to age.

This swift Soul ever changes, and transforms
Its robes of matter. Through the stars it storms,
Destroys and builds anew :
From hill to hill and peak to peak it springs :
Along the waterfalls its wild voice rings :
It glitters in the dew.

It changes cities. Where were once tall streets
Now through dark rushes the brown moor-hen fleets ;
The bittern strikes the air
With its strange hollow cry. Nothing can rest :
All things seem bent on a fatigueless quest ;
God's giant growth they share.

Love grows and changes. Every day we rise
And see new beauty in the loved one's eyes,
New star-depths therein pent.
All love on earth is like a fallow field ;
In heaven love's fruits shall mellow, and shall yield
A measureless content.

A kinglier race than ours may rule the sea :
Our race to this may but precursor be :
When time devours our graves
Strong hands may drive new keels along the deep
And break with iron prows the stormless sleep
Of summer on the waves.

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Yet in the depth this changing Soul abides
Changeless. Its changes are the surface-tides
On an unfathomed sea.
The purple depth is changeless. Far below
It marks not interchange of sun and snow,
It fluctuates not, as we.

From this strange God-depth all things seen arise.
The green waves glowing underneath blue skies
 Are but the surface-flowers :
There is a silent depth, where no waves gleam ;
Where God for ever follows out his dream,
 And shapes all dreams of ours.

In this vast God-depth we and ours have birth.
Thence spring the sights and lights we see on earth :
 The great gold-cinctured sun ;
The stars that fleck the solemn deeps of air ;
The countless flowers that make earth's garden fair,—
 That blossom, then are mown.

All beauty that can charm and fascinate,
That opens timeless dreamland's sacred gate,
 In this God-depth is born :
The noble colours of the sunset-lakes ;
A girl's pure eyes, from which the sunrise takes
 Light sweeter than of morn.

From this unchanging depth so fair and strange
We mortal spirits, the prey of time and change,
 With travail do arise :
To this unchanging dreamful depth we go
When death's wild storm-hued waters' overflow
 Darkens our hills and skies.

This is the only thing that changes not :
That reaches forth to near shores, shores remote ;
 That in its vast embrace
Foldeth alike the sinner and his crime,
The blood-red agonies of mortal time,
 The warrior-winds of space.

The dead, the living, the divine, the strong,
The weak, the base, the noble,—passion's song,
 Love's ecstasy supreme,—
Sorrow's deep moan that chills the leafless air,—
The voiceless pang of motionless despair,—
 Pure love's first sinless dream,—

The laughter in the eyes of maidenhood,—
The frozen horror of the speechless wood
 That watched a murder done,—
The clammy gladness of the wave's snake-lips
That licked the yielding planks of death-doomed ships,—
 Light, and the morning sun :

From changeless God these changing phases flow ;
From him they come, and back again they go
 Unerringly to him.
He sways the whole, and brings from evil good,
Slow-labouring in eternal solitude,
 In eyeless depths and dim.

THE CROWN OF DEATH.

STRANGE is it how the hand of Death bestows
 Upon the humblest head
A crown more sweet than garlands woven of rose,
 How kingly are the dead !

To-day this girl laughs out from coral lips :
 Within, the smooth teeth shine.
She climbs the hills, or watches the white ships
 Upon the horizon-line.

How full of lovely life she is to-day !
 How her clear laughter rings !
To-morrow she is dead and passed away :
 No more the young voice sings.

And then how deep the awe that holds us bound !
 The merry girl we knew
Has passed beyond earth's silvery rille's sound,
 Beyond sunshine and dew.

She knows to-day what we not yet may know,
 Sees what we cannot see,
Hears songs we cannot hear. She puts on now
 Her immortality.

The simplest child, when crowned by Death's great hand,
 Becomes a queen or king ;
A citizen of the untraversed land ;
 A dream-girt ghost-like thing.

The golden hair that once we knew so well,
Bright-shining in our sun,
Shines now in sunlight strange that never fell
On heights man's foot has won.

The eyes we loved,—that looked along with us
On green-robed hedge and plain,
Will never more regard the prospect thus,
Will gaze not thus again.

They gaze at flowers and hills we cannot see ;
At stars we cannot guess :
But yesterday they smiled at you or me ;
The red lips laughed their “ Yes ! ”

To-day they will not answer. No, the child
Has outgrown our demesne.
We are the children. She was falsely styled
A child,—she is a queen.

THE REAL AND THE IDEAL.

SOME live through many lives. Some pass at once
Beyond the region of our stars and suns
 Into a higher air.
Back some return, and ever back again—
Renew their pleasures, and renew their pain ;
 Their foreheads once again are grooved with care.

With lust some souls for countless ages burn :
Some after earth's high prizes pant and yearn
 And toil for years untold.
Some seek for raptures won at point of sword
And for wild battle's turbulent reward
 For ages. Some for centuries worship gold.

The beauty of form that womanhood reveals,
A robe which half displays and half conceals
 The spirit's deeper charm—
The glory of this may keep a soul spell-bound
For centuries that lapse past without a sound.
 His heaven is in sweet curve of breast or arm.

The joy of holding manhood's heart enchained—
For this joy many a woman has remained
 On earth for centuries long.
A robin here and there repeats one note
Till, wildly in love with his own throbbing throat,
 He greets eternal mornings with his song.

There are, I doubt not, souls on earth to-day
Who watched the waves in many a Grecian bay
Break, with their ripples blue.

Some hearts have loved a woman's form so well
That only to possess her soul were hell :—

These tarry on earth for a myriad ages too.

Helen is here mayhap, and Paris' face
Troubled to madness by her changeless grace.

Napoleon haunts the field
Of ominous Waterloo. He is not dead :
He still confronts the line of moveless red,
And cannot die because he will not yield.

Hosts of uneasy spirits cannot pass.
All souls who fail in the earth-sphere to amass
Sufficient spirit-power,
Too weak to enter on the life beyond,
Still travail here, and sorrow, and despond :
For ever in the bud, they cannot flower.

Lovers have found their ladies' lips so sweet
That they have prayed for nothing save to meet
Those lips eternally.
God grants their prayer ; for back to life they come
And haunt unalterably their earthly home
And watch the same sun light the same grey sea.

But those who pass and never need to turn
Back to this earth-sphere, live and love and yearn
And labour in higher ways.
Theirs is reality. Ours is the dream.
They live and love indeed. We only seem
To live and love. We twine pale phantom-bays.

The soul's eternal never-cloying kiss,
This has the true possession in it,—this
 Is sweeter than the dream,
The phantom of a kiss that has detained
Millions of lingering hearts its ghost-touch gained
 While earth-suns glimmered on green wood or blue stream.

When all we deem so precious quite has past—
Love (as we term it), passion—when the last
 Flower withers at our feet,
Then first the impassioned love-life will begin ;
Then first will heart and soul and spirit win
 Continuous joy, imperishably sweet.

Not the white phantom passion-flowers we see,
Not these shall gladden heaven eternally ;
 Bright leaf and petal-plume,
They perish. God transmutes with living breath
The wintry mortal likeness of their death
 Into the power of an immortal bloom.

When all things else are passing to decay
Then flames the dawning of their bridal day
 On many who suffer long.
Death is beginning. Death is very birth
To worn-out hearts, and to the tired-out earth
 Superb renewal of her summer song.

SONNET.

CHARLES GEORGE GORDON :

KILLED AT KHARTOUM, JAN. 26, 1885.

IN these wild later days when faith seems dead
And the old Hebrew creed a worn-out thing ;
When hope in heaven's eternal righteous King
Seems fading from the earth, despair instead
Filling the hearts of Youth and Age with dread
And crowning Winter and dethroning Spring ;
When no man knows what the next morn may bring
While watching sunset flaunt its soulless red ;
When grim doubt triumphs, and all hearts wax cold
And weary, yet again was faith new-born
In one man's heart on whom the world's first morn
Still gleamed, with God within the morning's gold :
God, disregarding this deaf century's scorn,
Spake face to face with one man as of old.

THE DIRECT AND THE INDIRECT TOUCH.

IN closest contact with the Jewish race,
Hand as it were in hand, and face to face,
God stood.
Each mortal action thrilled to the very heart
Of the Immortal. Man was actual part
Of God. Man—God : one double solitude.

Man acted then as limb, or tongue, or hand
Of God,—as under his direct command,
As swayed
By his immediate voice, or his swift eye.
God's trumpet-message shook the stormless sky
And man, with terror at his heart, obeyed.

God spoke to Greece through loveliness of form :
Not through the rolling Sinaitic storm,
Or thunderless blue air.
Nay ! through a girl's unfathomable grace ;
Or through the kinghood in a Hector's face ;
Or through the golden light in Venus' hair.

By gifts he spake—not now by the direct
Strong former touch, as to his old elect
In fiery Palestine.
God here withdrew the fierce light of his face
That men might better apprehend the grace
Of Beauty, curve by curve and line by line.

To-day he speaks to us—sometimes by Art ;
Sometimes directly—to the broken heart,
Or will.

Sometimes by messages the sunset brings,
Or the first star whose golden sandal springs
Alert above yon purple-shouldered hill.

Perhaps for many a day and many a night
He leaves the moon and soft stars to give light ;
The world seems empty of him ;
Then on a sudden, sundering the skies,
He, the Jehovah, on the spirit's eyes
Flashes, till every star in heaven turns dim.

A POET'S THOUGHTS.

THE thoughts that haunt the poet like a dream,
Strange sweet ghost-shapes that through his fancy gleam,

Will one day haunt all hearts as well.

He fills the wide world with his love of flowers,
And with his love of summer sunlit hours,
And with his hate of hell.

The woman whom he loves and crowns shall stand
One day imperial over every land.

The passionate eyes that haunt his sleep
Shall one day flash upon the world, and make
(Not now the poet's, nay) the world's heart ache,
And make the world's eyes weep.

Whom he has crowned, is crowned. Whom he has raised
Shall in the end by all men's tongues be praised.

The carven brow he moulds for us,
Before the world is ever statuesque.
The king or charlatan he makes grotesque
Shall be grotesque for ever,—alway thus.

While creeds and sub-creeds pass, his dreams endure.
All that he dreamed of tender things and pure,
All that he touched to beauty and bloom,
All that he loved with god-like love, shall last
When every star we see to-day has past,
Orb following orb, into eternal gloom.

LOVE'S ARGUMENT.

He.— “ How lovely is that curve of dazzling breast !

Now am I blest

Beyond all words, in that thou art so fair ! ”

She.— “ Thou art the stronger. Teach me, love, to be

Ever to thee

True helper. In life's struggle let me share ! ”

He.— “ The starlit heaven is less sweet than thine eyes :

Within them lies

An unknown passionate world beyond my dream. ”

She.— “ Through this world's weary waste we have to go—

Climb from below

Long leagues before the mountain-summits gleam. ”

He.— “ Bend forward gently. Phidias could not shape

A neck's smooth nape

More utterly, invincibly, divine. ”

She.— “ The neck will shrink and wrinkle. Praise it not.

Leave lips and throat :

Kneel at the soul's imperishable shrine. ”

He.— “ Hath the soul radiant beauty such as this ?

Such lips to kiss,

Such hair to fondle, and such hands to stroke ? ”

She.— “ To-morrow some new woman will pass by :

Through mouth and eye

'Twill be to thee as if a new God spoke. ”

He.— “ Love me to-day. Lo ! all the heaven is bright

With sweet sunlight,

And yet thy loveliness outshines the sun. ”

She.— “ If I love thee, wilt thou love me till death ?

Will his cold breath

Leave the two souls inseparably one ? ”

PAST AND FUTURE.

VALES where the silken rose
In rathe abundance grows,
These, as the long years close,
 Our souls sigh after.
Not yet our tired heart thrills
At sight of blue bright rills
That rift the heavenly hills
 With silver laughter.

Still the old vales attract,
And still their charms exact
From word and thought and act
 Love and devotion.
Not yet through magic sleep
We pass to a new steep
And from it mark a deep
 Undreamed-of ocean.

Our thoughts still backward turn
Towards far-off brook and burn,
Forget-me-not and fern,
 And heath and daisy.
We are half in love with life,
Half long for death to wife,
So pass our days in strife
 And wanderings mazy.

Death hath not wholly won.
Still charm is in the sun ;
The gleaming ripples run,
 The blue wave dances :
We dream of boyish days
And smiling woodland ways, —
And now the soul delays,
 And now advances.

A bird's nest in the wood ;
A mountain solitude ;
A hill where rain-clouds brood ;
 A river region
Where the clear current sips
The green bank's mossy lips ;
Hedges of haws and hips,
 A scarlet legion ;

A reeded river marge
Whereby the painted barge
Slides, seeking the far large
 Waste sea's redundance ;
Gardens where blossoms spread,
Geraniums pink and red,
Pansies with purple head,
 In sweet abundance ;

These things lure back again
Our thought, our love, our pain.
We hear the old love-strain
 Which that brown throstle
Sang through the sunset-air
In the great beech-tree there,
Pure, silver-throated, fair
 Spring's first apostle.

And yet a nobler song
May greet our ears ere long,
Full of glad voices, strong
 Unknown new-comers,
When past our death we climb
Beyond the reach of time,
Past snows and ice and rime,
 Past springs and summers.

The future is our own :
Youth's flower-bright fields are mown ;
The past is overthrown
 By God's enacting.
No past, however sweet,
Can be the soul's retreat :
To ponder is defeat ;
 Rise, and be acting !

WOMAN AND NATURE.

A GLORY of light beyond his utmost dream
Had flashed with sunlike flame and moonlike gleam
On Wordsworth's eyes
Had he but understood how woman fills
With lovelier light than theirs the laughing hills
And answering skies.

The secrets of the grass and of the dew,
And of the lakes, the lonely poet knew :
These spake aloud.
He heard the voices of the stars at night
As they climbed upward from slow height to height,
From cloud to cloud.

And yet he missed the magic of each place,
Because he missed the magic of the face
Of her in each
Who sways, and will for ever, Nature's whole
Recipient tender sisterly pure soul,—
Gives breath and speech.

The face of her who fills the hills with bloom,
And bids the spring with swift-foot beauty come,
And bids the heart
Of man awake and hearken and reply ;
The face of her who makes the sea and sky
• Vocal for Art.

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Who yields his spirit to the sterile hills
Wins his reward. His lonely strong heart thrills
At storm and sun ;
At bastioned thunder-cloud, and mountain rain,
And light renewed when the green slopes again
Gleam one by one.

He hath his high reward,—and yet the higher
Reward and sweeter is to feel the fire
Of love suffuse
The crags and glens and mountain-threatened vales ;
To know the sovereign of the streams and dales,
The rains and dews.

This surmise of the love within the rose,
This sense as of a Spirit whose passion glows
In flower and tree,
Links a diviner magic than he knew
To those same valleys Wordsworth wandered through
Yet could not see.

This sense of somewhat waiting just behind
The mountains azure-peaked and sombre-pined,
Behind the skies,
Diffuses sweeter glamour through the whole
Of Nature,—adds to Nature woman's soul
And woman's eyes.

SONNET.

TO ENGLAND.

DARK days are coming, England. Lo! the sky
Is foul and rank with treason, and there are
Who say they see the setting of thy star
And hold that thou wilt pass away and die.
With storm and strife, with keen device and lie
Thy foes assail thee. Thou hast journeyed far
Since on the Belgian plain thine hosts did bar
The hosts of France, and mocked the eagle's cry.

But thou art still the same. Thine eyes of fire
Have still the strange strong look of Waterloo :
If now thy foes are many, and full of ire,
Eager thy toil of centuries to undo,
Yet still thou hast the power, if thou desire,
To thine own deathless record to be true.

Feb. 8, 1885.

“THE SOVEREIGN ROSE.”

“God, having made the countless flowers of earth
That laugh amid our woods with choral mirth
Of clustering sister-stems
And having thronged the realms of azure space
With star on star, and crowned each star with grace
Of blossom-diadems,—

“God, having made the flowers, had still one more
To mould and shape—no model in his store
Suited his work’s grand close ;
So he created woman’s lips for this,
And with the royal fragrance of her kiss
Imbued the sovereign rose.

“Therefore all love is good. Who wins a flower
Wins a new fragment of God’s life that hour,
And wins one glance supreme
Into the deep abysses of God’s heart,
Limitless depths beyond the strength of Art
To fathom in a dream.”

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So speaks the poet in his early days.
Each sweet first tender impulse moves and sways
His heart, so swiftly won !
He dreams beneath the moon, and thinks the night
Sufficient. When a million stars are bright
The eye forgets the sun.

Yet surely comes the hour when through his dream
The morning breaks. Sweet was the moony gleam
That lit the soft night-breeze ;
Sweet was it just to cull love's lighter flowers
In life's first lighter less impassioned hours
And rest content with these.

At last the poet apprehends the soul
Of woman,—knows that he, to win the whole,
Must give the whole as well :
That what he gives, he wins ; that woman grows
(Just as man wills) to earth's divinest rose
Or fieriest flower of hell.

Who giveth much, receiveth much. Not he
Who sings of her soft tresses tenderly
And loves her for an hour,
Not he shall win her worship absolute :
Seldom that man shall grasp the final fruit
Who dallies with the flower.

Woman can equal man in loving strength :
She shall surpass him, when her heart at length
Quite flowers with fragrance fair.
The man who brings her all the soul of Art
Never quite wins her secret silent heart
Unless his soul is there.

'Tis soul and soul. The perfect souls must meet
In union never-ending, ever-sweet,—
In love's sublime repose.
He who would sway the gentlest girlish heart
Must give his own, and give it not in part ;
He wins what he bestows.

PURITY OF HEART.

WHAT lured and won the poet's heart? Who knows?—
The passion of the throat, the lips' repose—

 The night's sweet darkness gathered in her hair?
Or was it rather the deep Spanish eyes?
The glance of light that to love's glance replies?
 The girlish gentleness of mien and air?

I think the poet's soul was won by this ;
Not by the sweetness of her rich soft kiss,
 Not by this only—though by this in part :
I think the poet's soul was won indeed
And won for evermore, though won with speed,
 By sovereign truth and purity of heart.

May 30, 1886.

THINE ENGLISH BEAUTY.

THE English breezes crowned thy young fair head,
And kissed thy lips, and made them roses red ;
The English meadow-sweet purloined thy breath,
Blossomed immortal then, and laughed at death ;
The mighty many-sounding English sea
Forgets to love its moon and worships thee ;
The English meadows, by thy beauty won,
Dream in thy glances and forget the sun ;
The English dales, and dells of deep-green gloom,
Beneath thy footing tremble into bloom ;
The morning follows thee ; the wondering night
Forgets its stars—for are not thine eyes bright ?
The English summer wind must tune its lute,
Love, at thy voice,—or be for ever mute ;
The laughter in the branches of the pine
Was never lovely till it copied thine ;
An English poet loves thee,—and his heart
For ever singing sings how small a part,
How frail a fragment, of thy beauty's soul ;
Can mortal foot attain love's timeless goal ?
Can mortal strength avail to worship thee
Who hast the sweetness of Eternity ?

DEATH AND LOVE.

WE rule the blue-green waves that round our shores
For ever surge. In vain the tempest roars ;
 The sea yields, and the land :
But death and love evade our conquering will.
We strive to master them. They cheat us still
 With unique sleight of hand.

The humblest cottage-home, whose garden gleams
With scented English blossoms, has its dreams
 Of love and death, alas !
Beside our hamlets ever stands the church,
And white tombs near it—under elm or birch,
 Nestling in dark-green grass.

The kingliest race is subject unto death.
The lordliest heart oft shudders at the wreath
 That it perforce must wear
One day,—the wreath of agony, when those
For whom life's sun, long ere our sunrise, rose
 Pass, and our souls despair.

No stroke of mortal sword, or shock of spear,
Can force our English-bred tough hearts to fear ;
 But one thing even we
Dread,—that shrill trumpet of malignant doom
Which summons our beloved to the tomb
 With fiendish constancy.

To see them pass, and helplessly to stand
By their bedsides while with white trembling hand
 They grasp death's hand and go,
This pierces to the heart. No mastering force
Can hold the blood from faltering in its course,
 From freezing in its flow,

When at the touch of death lo! love is gone,
And we are left unalterably alone.

 Death drives us to despair,
And when despair lifts up wild anguished eyes
To the grim heights of waste unlighted skies,
 Behold, a God is there!

Christ conquers race on race, and heart on heart,
Because he speaks a message not of Art
 And not of flowers and trees,
And not the message of the lover's rose,
And not the word of woman's mouth that glows
 Red-ripe, nor of the seas,—

No, not the thunder's or the lightning's word,
Nor voice as of the solemn mountains stirred
 By storms that never cease;
When earth has not one accent left of cheer
At last Christ's one word wins the human ear,
 And that one word is "Peace."

BURIED FLOWERS.

TO-DAY the poor man's fire ablaze
That saves him from the cold
Takes back the thought to other days,
To tropic woodlands old.
These coals that give the poor man heat
Once filled the air with odours sweet.

They waved as grass, they smiled as flowers,
They climbed the trunks of trees ;
They filled old long-forgotten hours
With odorous ecstasies.
These English coals which now we burn,
Black now, were once gay flower or fern.

They fill to-day the poor man's grate
And warm the wintry air.
Black lumps they seem ! How strange their fate :
Once they were passing fair.
They smiled in heaven's old morning-mirth,
And then were buried deep in earth.

It matters not ! To-day they rise,
And nobler work they do
Than when, 'neath ever-burning skies
Of ceaseless sunlit blue,
They filled the flowery vales with scent,
Till their first languid life was spent.



In this grey Northern land they burn,
Black shiny precious things.
They lend the heat by which the urn
To the bright tea-pot sings.
They lend us heat of heart to jog
Through ceaseless rain and endless fog.

Their lives are measured not by ours.
We live and die ; but they
Count by a million years their hours :
We are of yesterday :
The coals we pigmies pile and light
Were born in pre-Noachian night.

The chestnut-seller in the street
Keeps his hot chestnuts warm
With buried flowers that once were sweet,
That fronted sun and storm
In lands and years when things we see
Were still remote futurity.

The humming-bird has glittered down
On yonder mass of coal
When it was pliant creeper-crown
To some tree's mossy bole.
Nature's strange all-embracing plan
Stores up the priceless past for man.

Within earth's granary deep and thick
These silent stores were heaped
Till at the miner's sturdy pick
From the black depths they leaped.
Dead flowers must face our smoke and mist
Whose petals once the sun's mouth kissed.

And then they cheer us—you and me—
 With steady warmth and light.
They aid our English fireside glee ;
 They make the ingle bright ;
And then in flames once more expire
And, born in sunlight, pass in fire.

“WILL YOU GET ME SOME FAIRY-TALES?”

THREE years ago you asked for fairy-lore ;
Three years ago, three wild strange years or more,
 With girlish laughter
You revelled in the fairy-tales I brought.
We only dreamed of love. We guessed not aught
 Of all life's pain and strife that followed after.

To-day, again, you say “Bring fairy-tales.”
Yes, you are right. Whatever woe assails
 Wall, beam and rafter,
Of the frail house of life, it still is well
As far as may be in the realm to dwell
 Of love and fairy-dreams and young light laughter.

“Life should be one long fairy-tale for you ”
I said—“one summer dream of skies of blue,
 Were I deviser
Of life's events.” Three years have passed away.
Your poet's hair is some degrees more grey :
 Your black hair crowns a forehead three years wiser !

But I will work your bidding. We will go
Once more where magic silver waters flow ;
 Once more surprise her,
The Fairy Queen, and mark her deep eyes change
With sudden transformation sweet and strange
 Into your eyes, my miracle-deviser !

DRAMATIC DIALOGUES.

I.

She.—"WHY do you love me?"

He.—"For your coal-black hair
That brings before my eyes the passionate South :
Because, although my lips in song despair,
Hope thrills them at the touching of your mouth.
Because, when life was weary and at an end,
Like the bright soul of very Spring you came,
Sister and love, a sweetheart in a friend,
And fanned with girlish breath joy's flickering flame
And so I love you."

She.—"Will your love abide
Steadfast and faithful, since we cannot be
Sweetheart and lover, husband and fair bride,
But have to move apart eternally?"

He.—"Lady! the night when first you came to meet
A weary poet, placing trust in him,
Will fill my soul with memories starry-sweet
Till on night's purple robe each star grows dim."

She.—"But think, how long is life, how dull and cold!
Can such a love as this content you well?
To love, but never to possess and hold,
Men teach that this, to man, is worse than hell."

He.—"Worse than a hell it is! Yet you are fair:
God made me love you, and such love is gain.
If love at times seems shadowed by despair,
Still will I love,—if not in joy, in pain."

Perhaps, if early in life our eyes had met,
The strength for perfect love had not been ours :
But now upon the hills our feet are set,
And we can gather noble mountain-flowers."

She.—"But if you die, and if I marry then?"

He.—"Sweetheart, if God who made me love you so
Can take your lips, your heart, from me again,
There is no medicine for that mastering woe."

She.—"Stay—"

He.—"Never! Did not God himself declare
As down the starry heights his great voice rang
That you were destined for the one thing fair
For me? So I took up my harp and sang.
Did God not let me kiss the coal-black hair?
Yes, God and you—allowing bliss and pang?"

She.—"But ought you thus to have acted? Was it wise,
Knowing the barriers Fate has placed between?"

He.—"Lady, I met the splendour of your eyes,
And barriers vanished at that glance, I ween!"

She.—"What is the gain? Ephemeral surely and small,
When weighed with what man's heart counts gain and
bliss?"

He.—"Not half your soul I ask. I ask for all.
I ask for years of marriage in one kiss.
To feel your soul grow to me day by day
With lovely trust and confidence serene :
To know that doubts and fears have fled away :
To feel your girlish heart completely lean
On mine : this is the high reward I pray
Your sovereign grace to gift me with, my queen!"

She.—"And is that marriage?"

He.—"That is the deep soul
Of marriage, not the phantom and the form :

The marriage-love that, though wild thunders roll,
Can breast the cloud-waves and defy the storm.
Yes, this is marriage."

She.— "Is not marriage, then,
The orange-blossomed daily thing we see?"

He.— "Will lace and orange-blossoms help you when,
Loveless, you have to face eternity?
Will silk and silver and gold and praise of men
Assist, when you at last—look round for me?"

She.—"Nay, not so fast!"

He.— "Nay, faster—for I know,
As man knows deep by intuition's law,
I, having worshipped, having loved you so,
With such sweet homage and such rapturous awe,
That every other love, though it sound fair
And whatsoever gifts its right hand bring,
Would in its left hand bring you black despair
And sorrow past our mortal reckoning.
No woman ever is loved as I love you
Twice on the earth, twice in eternity:
You'd miss my old grey eyes, and find the new
Brown eyes a trifle tedious, it may be!"

She.—"Brown eyes are pretty."

He.— "Yes, your brown eyes have
The Pyrenean magic in their gaze:
Most stately, queenly, thoughtful, noble, grave,
They make me dream of Southern hills and
bays."

She.—"But I,—I was not talking of my own"—

He.—"And I,—I never talk except of yours"—

She.—"To argue with a poet"—

He.— "Ah, your tone
So silver-sweet, ineffably allures!"

She.—"But, just to say the same old thing once more,
We are debarred and shut off, each from each."

He.—"Can wave thrill wave along the shadowy shore,
Can moonbeams mix above the glimmering beach,
Can star reach star across the tremulous night,
Can sun touch sun across wan leagues of air,
And cannot we blend sorrow and delight
And peace unchangeably, my one thing fair?"

She.—"A poet's thought and diction!"

He.—"Nay, the truth

To-day as ever is in a poet's dream :
True visions, as of everlasting youth
And endless summer, through your glances gleam."

She.—"And if I trust you utterly?"

He.—"Your trust

Will not be misplaced. Set your lips on mine.
When heaven's stars vanish, worn to golden dust,
Unwrecked, undaunted, shall our love-star shine."

DRAMATIC DIALOGUES.

II.

He.— “MARRIAGE is friendship,—but it adds a higher
And nobler sweetness to the friendly phase ;
Touches emotion with diviner fire,
And wreathes pale crowns with crimson blossom-
sprays.
Something supremely sweet and pure it brings,
Yet all the sacred gifts that friendship brought
Are still included.”

She.— “Necklaces and rings
And bracelets seem to me the gifts most sought
By average brides ; and by the average man”—

He.— “Yes, that is just the sorrow and the curse—
The misery, the grief, the bitter ban,
Too sea-deep to be sounded in a verse.
Most bitter indeed it is that love should be
Degraded (as it is) far, far, below
The level of friendship even.”

She.— “Yes, I see
Daily how marriage ends in strife and woe.
That makes a woman cautious.”

He.— “Well may she
Be cautious, for she, giving, gives her all.
She gives the wonder of her purity.
Her gift is infinite : man’s gift is small.
And yet not always. When a man bestows
His noblest purest manhood, then the gift

Has its own godlike fragrance, though the rose
Of womanhood be sweeter."

She.— "Thus to sift,
Divide and analyse, dissect and part
Love (poor old sweet love!) makes one half des-
pair."

He.— "Yes, but the lesson is—Find one true heart;
Hold it God's choicest gift, his dower most rare.
And for much-blundering man the lesson is—
Raise woman; help her; learn, if she be pure,
She wholly gives her being in her kiss:
She loves with love most sacred and most sure."

She.—"How did you learn this? True it is indeed,
But as a rule men hear it with surprise."

He.—"I learnt it where I learnt my whole love-creed,
Through watching the pure woman in your eyes.
One woman can reveal all purity,
All love, all womanhood, deep things past speech,
To her one lover, so that lover be
Willing to let her, quite unconscious, teach."

She.—"Unconscious—yes!"

He.—"That is the very chief
Of all things. As our love and friendship grew
From spring to summer, from slow bud to leaf,
From autumn skies to heights of summer blue,
I watched you daily and within your eyes
I read deep lessons, as I marked the change
From fair bright girl to woman fair and wise,
As your thoughts ripened, took a wider range.
But if you had not been unconscious—quite—
All had been spoilt. So tender is the flower
Of womanhood the least fleck mars the white,
Sullies its petals, and discounts its power.

In fact the insane whole effort of the world
Is to destroy the thing it values most ;
To force from blossom-folds not half unfurled
A fragrance which, if scattered, soon is lost.
If only all women were as pure as you ”—

She.— “ Or all men sound of heart, my true old friend ”—

He.— “ Love would be fresh and sweet as morning dew,
And half the sorrows of the world would end.”

DRAMATIC DIALOGUES.

III.

She.—"HAVE you no faith in God?"

He.—"At times I have :

At other times my very soul despairs.
The world seems one enormous loveless grave,—
Dark, but for fiery blasts of hell's hot airs.
Yes, my queen-sweetheart, were it not for you,
I think I'd hardly care to struggle on :
Still on me beamed a glimpse of sunlit blue
And God's eyes seemed to smile, when your eyes
shone,
I know it. Yet a horror grips me hard,
A horror lest the Lord, in bringing you
Into my life thus, played his last trump card
And now has nothing further good to do.
Such eyes as yours he wisely kept in store :
He could not twice produce a thing so sweet.
Now, having played you, what can he do more,
Save acquiesce in sorrow and defeat?"

She.—"Another inference is just and wise,
Juster and wiser ; that the God who put
Beauty and hope (you say) within my eyes
Can bring life's bud to flower, life's flower to fruit."

He.—"And yet he seems to me a Janus-god
Often,—two-faced, deceiving, wanton, hard.
Why did he open out so sweet a road,
And then leave every gate at the ending barred?"

In one word, why did God so fill my heart
With overflowing love and sweet desire,
Desire of you, if at the end we part?
Can God make holiest hope, profoundest liar?"

She.—"We have not parted yet."

He. — "The very thought
Is like a storm-wind whirling all the stars
Across black space. God made this world for nought,
The golden sun, soft Venus, fiery Mars,
The universe in fine, when thus he brought
My strong love face to face with mocking bars!"

She.—"Perhaps, where love is, iron bars only *seem* :
One day yourself may own that God is true,
True past your wildest most poetic dream."

He. — "On one condition—that he gives me you."

BORN UPON NEW YEAR'S DAY.

BORN with the glad New Year,
Thou bringest blessing, dear,—
Thou also makest all things bright and new :
Thoughts of spring's sunnier skies
Gleam soft within thine eyes,
And dreams of summer's dome of statelier blue.

Thy birthday is a sign
Made evermore divine
To me, as unto man the New Year's birth :
A sign that God is good ;
That bare-branched dreary wood
And grove will laugh once more with leafy mirth.

A sign that once again
Summer will banish pain ;
Thou art my ever-present New Year's day—
Thou art my sign from heaven,
My sweet one bright star given
To light a weary heart along the way.

Be ever unto me
A New Year. As to thee
Thy birthday brought the New Year's light and shine,
Bring me an ever-true
Delight, an ever-new
Summer of hope in God and love divine.

A QUEEN'S MANDATE.

BACK to the smoke-fed city from the sea
Thou, stronger than the sea's hand, drawest me :
Back, past green hill-side, flower and field and tree,
 To where the eternal fog-bound turrets rise.

For thy sake dearer than the mountain-air
And than the breezy cliff-tops even more fair
Are the dim robes of mist the houses wear
 Beneath their sunless moonless starless skies.

Thou biddest me return, and lo ! I leave
The golden-coloured morn, the crimson eve ;
Thy queenly laughing mandate I receive,
 And bend before the sovereign in thine eyes.

I leave my labour here,—I put it by ;
I bid farewell to the wide dome of sky
And to the sea-bird's silver wings that fly
 Across the watery waste that throbs and sighs.

Thou art my ocean, love, my star and sun ;
Without thee heaven is lost, heaven hardly won ;
As if love never yet had even begun
 I seek thee, longing to be made more wise

In holiest love-lore, love, than ever yet ;
Feeling as though our eyes had never met ;
Feeling as though thy lips had not been set
 On mine,—as if sweet love were still surprise.

For that is what I ever feel of thee :
Thou art as new-born as the new-born sea
Each morning, or the new pink almond-tree
That with the pinkness of the morning vies.

Thou art as new-born as the gracious gold
That clings around the sun's form, fold on fold,
Each break of day. Thou never canst grow old ;
Thou art the truth, and death is he who lies.

Thy strong attraction over leagues of space
Lures me and draws me to thy dwelling-place ;
I long to watch the beauty of thy face,
The magic in thy glance that never dies.

As the strong sun attracts the furthest star,
Piercing past wall of storm and cloudy bar,
So where thy most magnetic glances are
I have to be. I am thy spoil and prize.

If I were further than the furthest light
Whose rippling wave-beats strike upon our sight
Still wouldst thou draw me, O my one delight ;
Thy magic spell I still should recognise !

So farewell, hill and sky and stars and sea !
My love, my own true loved one, summoneth me.
Where thou art, all God's stars must surely be,
For in thy glances star to star replies.

THE ARTIST-SOUL.

THE clear wave's tender green, the purple skies,
Take all their colour as the soul's deep eyes
 Regard them day by day.
Nought, save as we regard it, has one shade
Of colour. Our thought gilds the autumn glade
 And tints the rainbow spray.

Is any soul in love? The groves assume
That heart's high radiance, and they steep their bloom
 In that heart's tender light.
If our hearts quite were sinless, we should know
How streamed each fiery sunset's golden glow
 O'er Eden's every height.

If our hearts quite were pure, and quite were fair,
What wondrous raiment would the spring-meads wear,
 Outdoing all their past !
With what gold crownals would the kingcups reign !
The orange lily at our doors would gain
 Its marriage-robcs at last.

If our souls saw with conquering sinless eyes
The heights and depths, the sacred sunlit skies,
 The moon's orb silver-fringed,
All things would be transfigured. Eden waits
To ope to mortal its immortal gates :
 On our will all is hinged.

Who conquers self, shall for the first time see
The marvel of a snowdrop's purity,

Inhale the violet's breath.

Who conquers self, shall wholly understand
The solemn meaning of the sea and land,
The laws of life and death.

Who conquers self, shall understand the whole
And with the cleansèd eyesight of the soul
Observe all things anew.

The new-born emerald mountain-slopes shall gleam
With all the light and richness of a dream,
Sparkling with morning dew.

The soul shall rise triumphant, and shall say,
"The wonder of this rhododendron spray
Is wholly new to me.

In all old days the tossing tides I saw
Were dark and turbulent. With love and awe
I watch my first blue sea."

THE HEAVENLY ARMIES.

THE heavenly hosts are ever marching
Upon their eager way
To reach the abodes of mortal anguish :
They march both night and day.

Along the heavenly plains their banners
And plumes and keen swords shine :
The heavenly hosts are ever passing
Across earth's frontier-line.

Never was human soul beleaguered
But in some barrack-square
Far, it may be, in utmost heaven
Rang out the bugles' blare.

Never was human soul encompassed
By dark foes crowding round
Without the tramp of heavenly legions,
Without their trumpets' sound.

For ah ! their strong celestial Leader
Sends not his aid too late.
He finds not us, as we found Gordon,
Dead at the city's gate.

Too late our "thin red line" advancing
Filed through the desert grim :
We saved a fragment of our honour,
But ah ! we saved not him.

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Remember this—the hosts have started.

They march by day and night :
At dawn perhaps, or in the gloaming,
They'll flash upon thy sight.

Far-off upon the highway dusty
Their plumes and helms will gleam !
And all thy night, or day, of battle
Shall end, as ends a dream.

WALT WHITMAN.

THY country waits its bard. This thou hast seen. —
Thy soul hath revelled in the forests green ;
 The solemn purple plains ;
The immense far range of hills whose summits hoar
Mix with the eternal blue ; the ceaseless roar
 Of rivers swollen by Titanic rains :

Somewhat thy soul hath gathered of the might
Of thine America ; by day, by night,
 Watching, thy gaze hath won
A measured glimpse of what man's eyes shall see ;
While Europe's slaves to kings have bent the knee
 Thou, yokeless, hast been vassal of the sun :

Thou, scaling thought's untrodden mountain-sides,
Hast felt the heart of Freedom like a bride's
 Against thine own heart beat ;
While the old world struggled, cramped by prison-bars,
Thou, seeking Freedom's palace lit by stars,
 Didst pass the heights where storms and the eagles meet :

And yet thy giant-futured marvellous land
Still needs a seer whose soul shall understand,
 And, understanding, sing.
When the true poet comes, then he will reign
O'er huge America from plain to plain,
 And be the land's first royal-sceptred king.

Nature's wild heart is fevered till it speaks.
The deathless music of the mountain-peaks

And waves is yet to be !

America, though Whitman gave you much,
He gave you not the missing royal touch :

He spake not like your plains, nor like your sea.

Before him visions full of power have shone ;
He speeds the work of preparation on ;

He clears and paves the way.

But presently a singer will arise

With Hugo's sovereign harp, and Shakespeare's eyes.

He comes not at the dawn. He waits the day.

Then the great conflict that men watched, and held
Their breath,—till slavery was smitten and felled

Across the road of time,—

That giant warfare shall find voice, and breath

Divine shall fill the very lips of death

And fan your Epic into fire sublime.

No history speaks until its bard is there.

The very guns hang fire. In vain the air

Is angered and ablaze.

Homer alone gave endless life to those

Who wrestled where the Trojan turrets rose

And fell before the Spartan woman's gaze.

Napoleon never fully lived until

In Hugo's song he lived, and drank his fill,

Though dead, of life divine.

The Third Napoleon never fully fell

Till Hugo's vengeful verse rang out his knell

And, sword-like, smote past all the bayonets' shine.

And so with the great voiceless Western land.—
As woman strives in vain to understand
 Herself, till love draws near,
So vast America now silent waits
For him who shall unbar the golden gates
 Of song, and utter her each hope and fear.

Stream, mountain, sea, blue hill and purple plain,—
The woods that the great struggle dyed with stain
 Purpler than hill or sky,—
These all await the singer who shall come.
The singers of the hour are stricken dumb
 Beside the form they seek to magnify.

The passionate final love-work is not wrought
By these. Good gifts and noble have they brought :
 The song is still to seek.
But when the poet comes, the soul who hears,
With one great voice her dead and dying years,
 And dead and silent sons, shall straightway speak.

THE LONDON STREETS.

OF old the streets were sad and grim :
They stretched along, one mass of grey,
Vast leagues on leagues of saddening hue
That changed not if the heaven were blue
Or if the wintry sky were dim,
The same from day to day.

But now the London streets are bright :
In this one point our victory's won ;
Pure country flowers adorn our streets
And fill our balconies with sweets,
And make our homes a blaze of light,
And tell us of the sun.

Geraniums red as flame are there,
And golden-centred daisies white :
London makes Sussex ferns its own,
And calls on Devon for a loan ;
Pink fuchsias smile in London air,
And calceolarias bright.

But one thing yet remains to do—
To look beyond our balconies.
The girl-flowers who in thousands fade
Within our city's noisome shade,
Let them be loved and cherished too,
Not cared for less than these !

Not cared for less than flowers that cry
With somewhat in their speech of scorn,
 "Shame that the town that worships flowers
Should let far lovelier lives than ours
Perish! What if one rose should die?
 Another rose is born.

"But if ye lose one girl-flower fair
In these dark streets by thousands trod,
That means the loss to your grim town
For ever of one lily-crown,—
That means to angel-hearts despair,
 And agony to God."

GAZING BACKWARD.

WE shall survey our lives, when life is past,
With strange transfigured vision,—when at last
The whole before us gleams.
We shall say, “Here a victory was ours :
Here gathered we sweet wealth of passion’s flowers :
Here love’s eyes filled our dreams.”

Yes, all shall then be changed, and yet the same.
The fiery current of the sun’s red flame
Shall still dart down the air :
The flowers shall lavish fragrance on the breeze,
And still Spring’s kiss shall greet the lilac-trees
In London street and square.

Yet, as we look, how changed ourselves shall be !
With how far different glances shall we see
The house-tops veiled in smoke :
With what far other eyes shall we behold
The sunset struggle with its soot-grimed gold
Through city plane and oak.

Here loved we ; here we suffered ; here we won
A noble victory ; were here undone,
Were here restored and saved :—
Such thoughts upon the souls with which we rise
Through sullied smoke-spheres to the spotless skies
Shall be past change engraved.

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Passion is past. The deeds of love remain :
The generous deeds that, free from selfish stain,
 Illumed our life's highway,—
These now shine forth like stars. But for their light
The next world might be one black vault of night ;
 These turn the dark to day.

Our very hold on being now depends
On these our few good deeds. Our only friends
 In very sooth they are.
They shine forth, unforgotten, on our eyes ;
Five lamps perhaps in boundless wastes of skies,
 Or countless star on star.

NATURE'S TUITION.

A MAN learns passion as he learns the whole
Vast revelation of the unseen Soul,
 By gazing deep into a first love's eyes.
Man learns from his first love the starry lore ;
The secrets of green hills and golden shore ;
 The moonlit secrets of the purple skies.

Passion is taught by marriage lacking passion
To many a woman—Fate's relentless fashion
 Of teaching. Woman past the loveless eyes
Looks towards the eyes that can reveal her soul
Veiled still in maiden silence, and the whole
 Undreamed-of splendour of love's sunlit skies.

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Not always ! Sometimes early love is sweet
To woman—full of passion. She can meet
 With passionate virgin glance Love's burning eyes.
The whole world gleams with beauty at Love's tread :
A nobler sunset blushes golden-red :
 Love dominates the vast cloud-pillared skies.

And sometimes man learns love when, all around,
The autumnal wind sweeps red leaves o'er the ground ;
 When Death's from Love's divinely-coloured eyes
Are not discernible. Such love is strong :
It makes of life and death one deathless song,
 And one love-picture of the darkening skies.

THE WOMANHOOD OF THE FUTURE.

WHEN woman understands her own pure soul ;
 When she no longer takes
Man's thought of her to guide her to the goal ;
 When she awakes ;

When she once knows herself, the one pure thing
 Upon an earth impure,
Then she will change man's nature, and will bring
 Peace sweet and sure.

When she once knows herself—when she will be
 True to her own pure heart,
Then she will clothe with radiant purity
 All life and Art.

The world will be transformed. It waits for this,
 And it has waited long :
It waits for woman's perfect marriage-kiss
 And nuptial song.

It waits till she arises in her strength
 To bid all evil flee,
Saying, "Who would learn God's deepest truths at length,
 Must learn of me.

"For at the ending of the ages I,
 Man's sister and man's queen,
Stand forth to bid all forms of evil fly
 From our demesne.

"I come to make man pure as I am pure ;
 To bring delights unguessed ;
Joy that shall vanish not, but shall endure ;
 Rapture and rest.

"For man, unless his heart be pure and true,
 Must ever fail to see
The heart of that pure God who speaks his new
 Gospel through me.

"Ay, to the pure in heart God's world is fair !
 These see with perfect sight
How glorious is the summer sunlit air,
 The rose how white !

"These only can perceive the God who dwells
 In woman, and take part
In that great movement which our age foretells
 With brain and heart.

"Who seeth woman, shall see God. Who fails
 To see and understand,
Shall fail to find God—though he spread wide sails
 From land to land."

“HAVE FAITH IN TRUTH.”

HAVE faith in truth. The generations pass :
The centuries wither like sun-stricken grass :
The very stars are doomed :
Yet never one true word shall pass away.
The songs of David thrill our hearts to-day ;
His soul is disentombed.

His words move English hearts.—The words of Paul
Electrify and aid and lift us all
In our far Northern land.
No true word ever passes,—no Ideal.
Is any word of Christ to-day less real
Or parable less grand ?

Words spoken by blue calm Gennesaret
Are heard to-day where ceaseless wild waves fret
Wild echoing granite shores.
Though all things tremble at the touch of time
There is a power more solemn, more sublime,
Which past the time-realm soars :

There is a power at which the stars of space
Tremble,—a power which finds God's dwelling-place,
Quitting earth's lowlier clime :
The power of each strong human soul to say,
“ My life's true work shall never pass away ;
It laughs at death and time.”

THE INSPIRING SPIRITS.

THE spirits of stars, the spirits of waves and seas,
The spirits of sunset-clouds, the spirits of trees,
Inspire the poet's song.

He passes rapidly from sphere to sphere :
The mountain-thunder now enthrals his ear ;
Next with the sea-wind's harp he dallies long.

The dead hosts, myriads who have passed away,
Are marshalled and divided. Some hosts sway
The stormy purplest seas :
Others, far inland in the forest-nooks,
Rule only flowers and birds and rippling brooks
And the thyme-scented breeze.

The mortal poet, as from sphere to sphere
Upon our earth he passes, now can hear
The gentler dead hosts speak :
Next, full of lordly triumph, he bestows
Large speech and song's divine relief on those
Whose spirits haunt clouds, mist, and mountain-peak.

Therefore his heart is diverse, and his strain
Diverse—charged now with a tremendous pain,
The anguish of the dead :
Next winged amid the woods, and light as air,
And buoyant as that butterfly poised there
Upon the thistle-head.

Wild spirits' jealous outcries fill the breeze :
" Sing *us*," they say, " before thou singest these ;"
" Is not my wave-breast white ? "

The ocean-spirit says. " Hath not my face,
Full of soft forest-beauty, yet more grace ? "
The forest-spirit asks with laughter light.

" One sonnet ! " begs the fairy of the rose.
" Once let me speak in song that throbs and glows ! "
The battle-spirit craves.

Dead Cromwell yearns for utterance. Heaven and hell
Have each their calm or bitter tale to tell :
Each claims its own song-staves.

In every varying spot, in each new place,
The poet's singing changes heart and face.
He meets beside the foam
The passionate form of Venus, still as young
As when the eager waves that round her clung
Were altered, wave by wave, to white flower-bloom.

He meets again by yonder vine-tressed hill
Dante. His heart can sympathize and thrill
At a great city's pain.
In Paris blood-red revolution sweeps
Superb and dread before his eyes,—then leaps
In fierce song from his brain.

TO —.

THE light of mountains, and the light of skies,
Will fade out swiftly from before thine eyes :
 No more, blue seas will break.
Cast off thy faith in heaven ! The earth will fade.
Cease to believe in love ! No sunlit glade
 Will laugh and gleam and brighten for thy sake.

Thou standest now in deadly peril, friend.—
Lose faith in God and woman—all things end ;
 All things at least for thee.
Thy poethood, so sweet and pure and strong ;
The might and force and manhood of thy song ;
 Thy heart's communion with the stars and sea ;

These things depend on purity of heart.
Lose faith in woman ; desecrate thine art
 By low base dreams of her ;
Pollute thy poethood by thoughts untrue—
At the same moment all the sea's wide blue
 Thou dost defile and change and blot and blur !

Nature and God and woman,—these are one.
Thy worship of the rose and of the sun,
 And of the hills and skies,
This worship in thy heart is based indeed
On faith in heaven and God. Renounce thy creed,
 And lo ! that moment thy pure genius dies.

Pause—pause in time. Thou hast the power to teach,—
To lift men higher. Thou hast power to reach

The fair heights of the Ideal.

Defile not thus thy soul with thoughts impure.

Lose not thy faith in woman. Be thou sure,

Whatever else is false, her love is real.

Put doubt and sorrow from thee. Linger not

In that malarious and ill-omened spot

Where now thy tired feet stand.

Shake off the oppressing chains ! Be once again

A poet-flame, a light to lesser men ;

A light of song to lighten all the land.

THE REIGN OF MAN.

WOMAN is what man makes her. Either she
Transcends his utmost dream of purity,
Or under foot is trod.
The same soul that can grovel in the mire
Can seek the loftiest stars with starlike fire,
And point the road to God.

This is the sovereign crime of man, even this—
That when God sealed the fragrance in her kiss
Of heaven, and shaped each limb
With tenderest care, and left the virgin look
Still in her eyes which first of all they took
From gazing straight at him ;

That what God made so fair, we men unmake.
The royal look God fashioned for our sake
We change into the dread
Cold soulless look whose horror passes speech :
We silence woman's ringing laugh, and teach
The harlot's laugh instead.

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Ay ! more and more the future of the race
Turns upon woman's love and woman's grace :
Man's heart has had its day.
What wild woes are the product of man's heart !
What strange storm-melodies of wandering Art !
What love-skies cold and grey !

The heart of man has made its strong attempt ;
For countless years the soul of man has dreamt :

His dream's result is this—

That in our cities so the harlot reigns
That hardly now (man's is the shame) remains
One pure mouth left to kiss.

The horrible blue-pink most bestial face
That smiles its frightful smile ; the hideous grace
Of women most forlorn ;

The leering glance that leaves the thinker mute
With wild despair—"For if this be love's fruit,
God, why was woman born?"—

The look which with a fiend's precision speaks ;
The hollow, but carnation-coloured, cheeks ;

The lips, one scarlet line ;

The pencilled eyes, whose only girlish dream
Is lust and dress ; the eyes that only gleam
When the head reels with wine ;

These painted tawdry sin-bedizened hosts
Who throng the London streets, like evil ghosts

From hell's own armies drawn ;

These girls, whose hearts should laugh and throb and ring
With laughter yet more silvery than of spring,
More joyous than of dawn ;

These legions, swollen each new day and night
By new recruits whom for our base delight

We seize on and retain ;

These preach, and clearly, not in words occult,
The noble large magnificent result

Of man's long centuries' reign.

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Now let the heart of woman have its way !
Give her five free full centuries from to-day

To try her hand at rule.

Concede at least to her the right to be
August and proud in maiden liberty,
Not passion's sport and tool.

Grant her the sweet right hitherto denied
To walk, a pure-souled equal, at man's side :

Grant her the right to be

A bride, no painted harlot (Does God paint
The rose whose richness makes the morning faint
With very ecstasy ?)

Let this last slave go free. And she shall rise
Then, with the birdlike rapture in her eyes,

The wifehood in her mien,

All gifts of sacred pleasure in her hands.

Lo ! where there crouched a slave, beside thee stands
An equal and a queen.

“THE PURE IN HEART.”

THE beauty of little things we never see ;
The beauty of one leaf upon a tree
 Where thousands wave :
The beauty of one shell upon the beach
Where thousands crackle at our tread, yet each
 Buries a sunset in its spiral cave :

The olive-green seaweed upon the shore,
Strewing the shingly sunlit briny floor,
 With sunlight cast
Through the bright fronds : the stretch of white chalk cliff :
The white foam-streak behind the arrowy skiff :
 The yellow moon against the tapering mast :

It needs a pure fresh heart to see these things.
To catch the music of the west wind's wings
 The soul must be
Freed from harsh labour and laborious care :
Then can it drink the beauty of moonlit air
 And apprehend the message of the sea.

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So with large things. Until the soul is pure
God is not seen, nor can the light allure
 That clothes the line
Of the next world's high hill-tops. Nor can she,
Woman, whose soul is like the sky or sea,
 Be apprehended save by love divine.

Who would see God, or woman, or the next
World—yes, or even understand the text
 Of hills or plains—
Must purify his inward vision first.
Never God's beauty yet, nor woman's, burst
 Upon the soul that selfishness enchains.

A rose to one man's insight is a rose :
A woman just a supple form that goes
 Along the street.
But to the pure in heart a rose's breath
Is woman's. Rose and woman smile at death.
 Rose, woman, God, are equal, being so sweet.

THE BACKGROUND OF LANDSCAPE.

THE sweet face loved within the city's smoke
Is not the face that, under birch or oak,
 The poet loves and sings.
The wingless love of cities changes form
When mixed with ardour of the wild sea-storm,
 And takes the sea-bird's wings.

This gives to love its splendour and its bloom,
This, the background of landscape. Love for home
 Hath all the world indeed.
The maiden loved within a wood of firs
Is not the maiden of the lone hill-spurs
 Or austere mountain-mead.

Change place, change power of loving.—Each new place
Hath its presiding tutelary grace,
 Its woman-spirit there.
The bower of roses gives the poet love :
So do the great sun-gilded peaks above,
 And the large roseless air.

The quiet garden gives the poet rest ;
The spot where, lip to lip, and breast to breast,
 Lilies and wall-flowers grow :
But so do the grand rolling curves of seas,
Deeper and vaster than the waves of trees,
 Crested with furious snow.

So who would make the landscape of his heart
Superb in aspect, perfect in each part,
 Must add pure line to line :
Must love not only maidens of the sea
But maidens born where the cloud-shadows flee
 O'er rolling slopes of pine.

Thus the background of Nature addeth charm
To beauty of dark eyes and curve of arm :
 In each place each is new.
Nor did yon beechwood ever seem so fair
As when we met that mountain-maiden there
 With eyes of mountain-blue.

For woman adds to Nature charm as well.
She adds the witchery to the ferny dell :
 Without her all is nought.
Without the brightness of her eyes, the night
Misses and mourns its stars. The lily white
 With lovelier touch she wrought.

She gives and she receives. The charm is hers
In truth that adds such magic to those firs
 Upon the green hill-side.
The laughter of those branches in the woods
Follows and corresponds to all her moods,
 To her love-laugh allied.

This is why, boyhood being left behind,
The man at first seems deaf and dull and blind
 To Nature's unchanged grace.
The boy saw wondrous beauty in the woods :
The man sees only leafy solitudes ;
 He longs for form and face.

But, later on, he catches further sight
Of woman—feels her in the snow-storm white,
 In the hills' starlit sleep.
His growing worship of the royal rose
Is worship of the royal mouth that glows
 Within the petals deep.

Never again is Nature wholly free
From woman now. Man knows her in the sea,
 For Venus nestled there.
Man feels with magic and unspoken thrill
Her beauty in the beauty of the hill,
 Her charm i' the sunset air.

Nature is woman's minister and slave.
The man resumes the worship that he gave
 To Nature in years gone by.
He takes his homage back from flower and tree
And sunlit lake and thunder-shadowed sea
 And star-embroidered sky.

He takes again the worship that he gave :
The lovely silver laugh o' the leaping wave
 To woman he transfers.
She is the universe : she sways the whole.
For her the waters lift their tides and roll.
 The witching moon is hers.

All things are hers, her own, by day, by night.
The man again revels in Nature's light,
 But now loves what he knows.
The flowers are no more what the boy's heart dreamed,
For something sweeter than the rose has gleamed
 As it were within the rose.

SOUL TO SOUL, IN HELL.

THIS damns our souls, this keeps us ever apart,
Apart from life and blue seas and the sun,
This,—that we slew an ever-trusting heart :
This damns us,—this vast evil we have done.

We,—you and I who in this weary hell
Gaze at each other with love-lacking eyes,—
Had once the chance to do supremely well,
Yet did supremely, foully, otherwise.

In seeking love, we lied to love. We lied
Each to the other, when we lied to her.
She might have climbed to heaven's heights at our side :
We trod her into hell. Did we not err ?

Did we not sin beyond all mortal thought,
Beyond redemption, in our ghastly dream ?
We longed to crown ourselves. A crown we wrought ;
But with her blood its hellish blossoms gleam !

That was our love, our passion—to create
An endless sorrow for a child to bear :
To make our “love” to her seem Satan's hate :
To turn her trust to limitless despair.

This was our love, our worship of the Lord.
And lo ! the Lord in whose high name we swore
Stood in our pathway with a fiery sword
And barred us back from Eden evermore.

So great we were,—in our own thought so grand !
So far above, beyond, the vulgar throng !
And yet the humblest heart in all the land
Would not have done a child this deadly wrong.

We thought to win each other,—and our doom
Is endless separation, endless loss.
Our bridal-chamber changes to a tomb
Which holds the form we nailed upon her cross.

GENIUS.

No mother owns a son.—Their lives are drawn
Together for a time. O'er valley and lawn
 Of this our earth they pass.
But as they older grow, their spheres divide :
One seeks by choice the ice-blue mountain-side :
 The other loves the daisied sunlit grass.

Many have lived before. Christ had derived
From many a star wherein his soul had lived
 Soul-learning, lessons high :
Perhaps had suffered for another race ;
Others perhaps had loved the royal face ;
 Another cross perhaps had seen him die.

And this is genius.—Genius has rehearsed
In other lives its tasks, performed them first
 In other lands than these.
On other azure waters Shelley sailed
Long ere his watchful guardian-spirit failed
 To gauge the peril of the Spezzian breeze.

Genius has lived and loved. Its head is hoar
With strange experience. Centuries before.
 Its birth, it toiled and dreamed.
No Phidias ever carved, no Titian drew,
Save from remembrance of an art they knew
 Long ere the earthly stone or canvas gleamed.

And so with love.—What draws our spirits close
Is just remembrance. Lo ! this scent of rose
 Upon the bridal night
That floats with sudden sweetness through the room
Brings back the faint remembrance of love-bloom
 Gathered in regions far beyond man's sight.

This subtle scent that in the girl's loose hair
Startles her lover—till his thoughts despair,
 They wander back so far !
What is it but the memory of an hour
When she perhaps, ensphered within a flower,
 Made sweet with that same scent some ancient star.

This is what draws our souls together,—this.
Not the lips' pressure, but the former kiss
 Repeated once again.
All perfect love is memory, nothing more.
Remembrance of a rapture known of yore :
 A pleasure our souls wrestle to retain.

All things are spiritual. In the end
Towards spiritual goals and aims they tend.
 By stage and stage and stage
And conquest over time and circumstance
We win our endless freedom, and advance
 Through storm-white waters towards the haven of age.

Then, it may be, the death that seems to slay
Will be the dawning of a new birthday :
 Our souls will realize
At one vast glance the lives that came before ;
Will garner all past history in their store ;
 Will meet remembered love in long-lost eyes.

Parents in spirit, spiritual friends,
Will throng to meet us.—Man, when born, descends
 From the angelic sphere.
Genius has lived before. It must ascend
As Christ did, heavenward, homeward, in the end ;
 Leaving its life's work to bear witness here.

DOUBLE PICTURES.

I.

THIS silent river flows in channel deep :
Along its margin giant elm-trees sleep,
Immersed in dreams.
It breathes the placid and thyme-scented air :
Past sedges bright and rushes debonair
Its blue wave gleams.

II.

A foam-belled mountain streamlet leaps along
Its rocky banks with swift defiant song,
Past boulders springs.
Its rippling waters, crystal-pure gold-brown,
Come bubbling, boiling, eddying, splashing, down :
The moor-side rings.

* * *

I.

This Southern girl's heart changes like the stream :
Yet how divine, how perfect, is the dream
That rests and sleeps
Within her marvellous eyes. Half cruel, she
Is passion's queen and slave,—yet quite love-free,
For all she weeps.

II. —

An English girl, deep-hearted, silent, strong,
Is like the river-wave that flows along,
Calm, hastening never.
Her love once given, is given. Is passion slow
To dawn ? Yet, when she loves, for weal or woe
She loves for ever.

SELF-FORGETFULNESS.

THIS is the secret of triumphant Art,—
To lose itself in Nature, pour its heart
 Upon the winds away.
Not to turn pale-hued at the storm-blast's drum,
Nor bugles of the wild waves when they come
 Fanfaring past the headland grey.

To lose its single self, and to suspire
With Nature's breath ; to know the clouds' desire,
 The life of stars and trees ;
To hold itself suspended in the mid
Large tide of things ; to lurk most safely hid
 Within the soft plumes of the breeze ;

This is the life of Art, the life of man :
This is the immortal life that ne'er began
 Nor has it end nor break.
We are constituents of the deathless whole.
To every golden star the human soul
 Is linked. The sun shines for our sake.

What heart can dread the billows fierce and strong
Who hears behind their blue-green ranks the song
 Of One who leads their charge ?
What human soul can sink to final death
Beneath their tides, if that soul breathes the breath
 Of deathless God through soul-lungs large ?

The lightning is our own. We tame its wings,
And lo ! our messages of love it brings

Along the safe straight wire.

We use the very force whose flash perturbs.—

We make the poison-hearted sluggish herbs

Lull human pain at our desire.

Nought fails us. Straight down history's iron grooves

A spirit cognate to our own heart moves :

His dwelling-place is ours.

If we once lose ourselves in his superb

Vast life, we win the force to chain and curb

The giant elemental powers.

All loss of self is gain. Love is just this—

Not the mere single isolated kiss,

Though every kiss is sweet,

But the reception through a woman's eyes

Of a new life, as self shrinks up and dies :

Heaven opens, when two spirits meet.

SIN,—AND FORGIVENESS.

A GIFT was given us once, a gift most rare,

To keep :

A child, with God's own sunshine in her hair

And God's own heart of love most pure and deep.

We understood her not. Her ways were not

Like ours.

We understood her not, because she brought

Held tight in childish hands heaven's unknown flowers.

And, seeing that her flowers were not of earth

Indeed,

We pained her soul and mocked her simple mirth

And called her choicest flower a worthless weed.

Her choicest sweetest flower was perfect trust,

Sublime :

A flower whose roots rebel against earth's dust

And sickly sand and waste infertile slime.

This flower from heaven we wildly cast away :

We slew

Her childlike faith. What searching hand to-day

Shall find so sweet a flower where that plant grew ?

We thought because the flower was pure and white

And frail,

Dreading excess of heat and ardent light,

That therefore was its scent of small avail.

But we know better now. The angels sought
And seized

What we, poor mad blind mortals, held for nought :
With what we heeded not God's heart was pleased.

We would not have her flowers. She bore them back
To heaven :

Yet, passing, dropped one love-flower on the track
That we who slew might know ourselves forgiven.

AFTER WEARY YEARS.

WHEN after weary years the poet dies
His chant will still add colour to the skies
And paint the sea-line blue.
Pure souls shall purer be ; the strong more strong.
Young hearts will leap with rapture at his song
To whom the world is new.

Never one shell upon the golden shore
But shall be brighter, freaked and tinted more
With rose-light, in that he
Watched with sad heart the slowly sinking sun
On many an evening when his toil was done
Over its parent sea.

For all his sorrow past, the future gains.
Its joys are deepest for his deepest pains.
It reaps the corn he sowed.—
A girl's eyes flash with light ? That light has leapt
Straight from his song.—A weary soul has slept ?
He lifted that heart's load.—

Through him the seasons smile, the blossoms bloom.
But he,—he sleeps so quiet in the tomb ;
All round him spreads the dim
Night of the dead. Man he has raised indeed ;
Laid the foundations of the future's creed ;
But, just God, what of him ?

TRUE KINGSHIP.

Not those who hold earth's thrones are rightful lords,—
Propped up by brainless and subservient hordes,
And fenced by walls of steel.

These are not the true kings whose sovereign grace
Reveals God's kingship to the human race,
To whom the ages kneel.

The highest king of earth, who sways wide lands
And grips blind millions as with iron bands,
When once his foot is set

Upon the irreparable spirit-shore
May find himself a human being, no more—
May find his kingship pending even yet.

WOMAN, AND GENIUS.

NOT genius, genius needs.
The fiery touch of genius would exhaust
Genius ; 'twas Margaret who conquered Faust.
Where genius fails, the simpler heart succeeds.

The heart that saves the heart
Wherethrough the wild poetic fire-throbs beat
Is not the heart wherethrough likewise there fleet
Strange fevering dreams of life, and dreams of Art.

The heart that saves is this—
The heart that represents in simplest guise
Woman. God's light must shine within her eyes ;
God's love must hallow her undoubting kiss.

The simplest singlest heart,
This saves the poet,—not the complex brain,
But woman ; simply she ; and she again.
She, being herself, transcends all heights of Art.

LOVE'S TEACHING.

THY life has not been wasted. Thou hast taught
Truths beyond thought,
Sweet sacred truths beyond my dream, to me.
Truths not one other woman could have told
Thy lips unfold.
Blind was I. Thou hast taught my soul to see.

For this I owe
Thanks infinite. For this I love thee so,
That thou hast shown me woman's heart indeed,—
So fair and sweet,
So far beyond a poet's dreams of it,
So far above man's common thoughtless creed.

Ah ! never think thy life is wasted, dear.
It blossoms here ;
'Twill blossom tenfold when thy work is done,
And when beyond these earthly scenes we go
To grasp and know
Joys that on earth can only half be won.

God surely sent—
Thy soul to teach love's stormless deep content
To me, thou haven of a poet's soul !
For this great end,
Love, sweetheart, lady, truest dearest friend,
He gave my spirit into thy control.

A WOMAN'S HEART.

WHAT gift is there that time cannot replace,
Not all its grace,
Not all the sundry gifts and dowers of time,—
A sweeter thing
Than all the seasons bring,
Than suns' and moons' and stars' gifts more sublime?

What gift is there which, if once flung away,
Nought can repay,
Not all the silent years of loss and grief,—
Not heaven indeed,
Nor any faith nor creed,
Nor summer's bloom, nor autumn's golden leaf?

What gift is there which God himself once deigned,
Since man complained
Of lonely life and of his daily task,
With his own hands
To bring the sorrowing lands
That groaned and grieved, yet knew not what to ask?

What gift is there beyond which lies a gloom
Deep as of tomb,—
No hope, no sunrise, should its light depart?
The gift is this—
A noble woman's kiss,
The perfect love of a good woman's heart.

THE STATUE.

WHITE, pure, superb, entrancing to the eye,
What living form can emulate or vie
 With this divine Psyche?
Greek art is just the soul of God made clear,
Undraped,—his message to the human ear
 Fresh from his burning lips eternally.

In the white perfect figure, nobly shaped,
Revealed for ever, beautiful, undraped,
 Unmarred, unstained, divine,
There is a gospel hidden. If we will seek,
God preaches through the stately curve of cheek
 And through each limb's inevitable line.

This is God's gospel written in white stone.—
Not on the Sinaitic Mount alone
 He thundered, through the storm.
He speaks to mankind's spiritual sense
Through beauty, and through the mystery intense
 That seems to robe an unrobed perfect form.

O wondrous Grecian sculptor, as divine
Was thy soul's handiwork in curve and line
 As work of God can be!
When God was weary and his chisel dropped,
He would not let the appointed work be stopped;
 He lent his sacred genius-touch to thee!

That thou might'st show that not alone in one
High Art can the everlasting work be done.

What Raphael's colours drew,
What Beethoven achieved, or what Mozart,
Or Shakespeare's verse inspired by Shakespeare's heart,
Or Hugo's, as his magic genius grew,—

This thou hast likewise perfectly attained.—
Woman through thine undying touch has gained

Indeed, a godlike goal.
Though twenty centuries have passed away
We worship here, and wonder at, to-day,
Thy revelation of Form's virgin soul.

UNCONSCIOUS TEACHING.

THE thoughts that trouble poets vex not thee :

Thy purity

Lifts thee for ever to a higher air.

Above the mists of life and all its gloom

Thou seest the bloom

In blue skies of the star-flowers clustered there.

We weary souls must struggle, ere we reap ;

Toil, ere we sleep ;

But thou without an effort enterest straight

The golden palace-doors that we uncloset

By fierce wild blows :

At thy mere hand-touch opens wide the gate.

Thou art so close to heaven and God indeed

That book nor creed

Thou needest. Thine own soul is so divine

Thou findest ready-graved and written there

Commandments fair,

Pure law by law, and sacred line by line.

If I would learn of God, I come to thee

And then I see

Straightway what long strange epochs could not reach.

Through thee, so simply sweet, I apprehend

Life's high true end

And learn as thine eyes, all unconscious, teach.

RENUNCIATION.

MAN fears sometimes lest, giving up too much,
Things sweet to touch,
Things sweet to see, things lovely to possess,
He may, perhaps, proceed a step too fast,
And, yielding, cast
Upon God over-labour, over-stress.

“If I give up my dearest heart's desire,
Can God inspire
His world mine abnegation to repay?
I yield my snowdrop. Can the Lord disclose
A queenly rose
Whose glory of bloom may light my wandering way?”

“Or am I casting over-much of weight,
A care too great,
Upon the Maker of all stars and flowers?
I shrink from giving up this longed-for thing
Lest I should fling
On God the burden of dark anxious hours.

“Each joy we quit for God, each deed we do
Noble and true
For his sake, claims its final just reward.
Sometimes to pass through self-denial's gate
I hesitate,
Lest I increase sums owed me by the Lord.

“The countless orbs are his,—star beyond star
Careering far
Through regions infinite of purpling air.
Yet can God cash me my one small star-cheque,
Or will it wreck
The starlit bank of God, presented there?”

BEYOND, EVER BEYOND.

BEYOND the outline of the furthest star
It may be, new star-globes and sun-globes are,
 Full of new life and force.
Past these again new systems, and past these
Eternal ever-blossoming galaxies
 That urge through the blue depths their fiery course.

In each star human beings there may be,
And forests full of many a giant tree,
 And ardent great new flowers,
And tides gigantic, plunging through the deep
Of oceans beating on vast shores asleep
 And dull and reckless of the waves like ours.

The sun itself, our sun, hurls from its heart
Titanic flames aloft. They upward dart,
 Hundreds of miles on high.
They shoot, red-flickering, through the enormous space
So tall they almost lick the next star's face
 And almost traverse the unmeasured sky.

There may be stars that sway as many moons
As we see stars. The human weak thought swoons
 Before the space profound.
Our sun (and we too) may be whirling fast
Around some unseen sun,—careering past
 Its unseen golden orb without a sound.

All stars we see may be but one small part
 Of wide creation. All perhaps may dart,
 All star-ships in full sail,
 Around some central sun ; and this, maybe,
 Round other suns to all eternity ;
 Sun beyond sun, till brain and eye-ball fail.

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Gods behind gods, vast rulers, there may be :
 Some gods to whom is given to rule the sea,
 And some to rule the air.
 Each star may have a ruler, and each sun
 A ruler ; or huge depths may own but one
 Monarch, whose power no rival thrones impair.

Beyond Christ, God.—And, beyond God again,
 New Gods of more Titanic heart and reign :

 Beyond these we may find
 New star-gods, ruling depths we cannot see ;
 God behind God to all eternity,
 Just as each star suggests a star behind.

The Ruler of this earth, this speck in space,
 May be subservient to the sun-god's face,
 A tributary lord.

Account he renders often, it may be,
 Of his great dealings with our land and sea
 To the higher God, for judgment or reward.

The God of the gold-tressed gigantic sun
 May be a mere proconsul-god to one

 Who rules beyond his gaze :
 God behind God, and dream beyond our dream,
 Till the stern eyes of far-off rulers gleam
 So faint, they seem like stars in the sea-haze.

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Yet greater far, and grander, and more high
In spirit than all this waste of sunlit sky
And God-lit sea and air—
More terrible, and more august and strong
Than all the sea-winds' wail, the mountains' song,
Is one strong human voice, one human prayer.

To the one central God-force most akin,
The human heart can instant entrance win
To even the holiest shrine.
It passes stars and suns, and makes its way
Beyond the last star's struggling worn-out ray,
Beyond the farthest far heavens' frontier-line.

The power (of God) that judges God indeed—
This power outstrips like lightning book and creed
And says—it cannot lie,
Being part of God—"Thou God art false, or true :
This was a weak unkingly thing to do :
That was, or was not, right, thou God most high !"

This is the power beyond the Titan sun
In fiery strength,—the giant force of one
Who waits and watches all :
The power residing in the human heart
To judge the whole, itself being but a part ;
The power before which thrones and temples fall.

The power within the unconquerable soul
Of man to judge and analyse the whole
And cry with strength sublime
"This deed is right, that base. Though all stars praised,
Yet would my lonely human voice be raised
To call injustice, even in God, a crime."

THE BORDER-BATTLE.

YES, weary it is. The days are full of sighing.—
Close to our hands the remedy is lying,

The cure for sorrow and care.

Stretch out thine hand. The poison-draught is ready.
See how below that bridge the dark waves eddy !

Are not sleep's lips of all lips the most fair ?—

So pleads the inner voice with dangerous pleading.
And yet the soul is great which, rent and bleeding,

Lives on and on and on.

"Great souls are strong to live." Great past our knowing
Is the brave soul who lives, when hope seems going

Where all youth's joys and rainbow-dreams have gone

When hopes and joys and friends have crossed the border,
Most great is he who, following out God's order,

This side the boundary stands

Safeguarding their retreat with sword undying
And mighty heart, and deathless self-relying

Strong fearless hands.

As yet no right is ours to cross life's limit.

The stream runs there. We may not ford or swim it,

Nor follow our friends, nor cry.

Silent we stand, our faces lifeward turning :

We may not yet indulge the soul's deep yearning :

We must not die.

The great soul trusts. The great soul waits, in quiet,
Though round him rings the unceasing border-riot

Of the red steely storm.

He waits till through the dawn, or through the gloaming,

He hears the tramp of the relief-guard coming

And sees their Leader's form.

THE VOYAGE OF DEATH.

JUST as the traveller, putting forth from land
At sunset, sees the waste on either hand
 Widen, and sees the shore
Slowly diminish, till the last land-breeze
Brings the last scent of thyme and scent of trees,—
 One faint waft, then no more :

As the night darkens slowly, and the coast
Becomes a faint far shadow, while the host
 Of waters wails around ;
As still the darkness deepens, till the sail
Stands out alone against the sky—one pale
 Ghost on the black background :

As next the gold stars one by one appear,
While the moon dominates with silver sphere
 The darkness wide and deep ;
As we forget the flower-delights of land,
Holding new star-companions by the hand,
 While worlds awake from sleep :

So life starts from green shores and early vales
Full of the scent of thyme, and rich with tales
 Of youthful fairy-lore ;
So life trends outward, till the deepening blue
Wild waters thrill the heart with laughter new
 That answers sail or oar.

So life steers onward, till the ghostly land
Glimmers far off, while strips of yellow sand
 Shine faintly through the haze ;
Till on a sudden stars and moon seem close
To the white sail, and sea-wind round us blows,
 Not land-wind of the bays.

Then first with awe we face the silent night ;
But afterward with solemn deep delight,
 Delight that ever grows :
For love seems nearer. If our souls give ear,
Love speaks through starlit waves with voice more clear
 Than through the sunlit rose.

Love still is with us in the lonely night ;
Though stars and moon and waters and the white
 Sail are our only friends.
Love still pervades this awe-inspiring realm,
And still Love's hand is at the vessel's helm,
 And still Love's song ascends.

Then, as the sense of earth-life fades away,
Glimmers a faint pure line of distant grey
 In front : the dawn is near—
The golden morning in whose ardent rays
A new land, with new cliffs and green-blue bays,
 Will make its outline clear.

The middle sea is death. The morning-land,
Full of flower-scents and rich with golden sand
 Along its sunlit marge,
Is the new morning-life towards which we haste,
Travelling across the moonlit landless waste,
 The flowerless meads and large.

Death's agony, its central pang, is this—
The old thyme-scent upon life's shores to miss
 Ere we can trust the new
Eternal sweet illimitable grand
Wild waste of water,—ere the morning-land
 Lifts its faint peaks of blue.

This is the agony. But trust the deep ;
The stars and waves that through their haunted sleep
 Murmur and chant and pray.
Then sweeter than life's cliffs with all their bloom
Shall be death's waves, for just beyond their gloom
 Lies unimagined day.

THE DEPTH OF HELL.

WHERE heaven exists, there must be also hell.—
When royal Guinevere succumbed and fell,
 O singer of Arthurian days,
Was there not scope for agony profounder
Than if no love passing man's love had crowned her
 And led her steps through sunlit ways ?

In this one point, O poet whose golden tongue
Has made the grey-haired far-off epochs young
 And filled them with immortal bloom—
In this one point thou hast failed. Thou hast drawn love's
 magic,
But not love's dark wherethrough there flash the tragic
 Unearthly lights of hell and doom.

A rose once fallen, and smutched and soiled and stained,
Is sadder than an oak-leaf sturdy-veined
 That falls, and little loss is there.
Just in proportion to a woman's sweetness
Is her great downfall's rigorous completeness,
 When hell breathes round with burning air.

The inconceivable and hopeless change !
The knowledge that, far as the eye can range,
 No pitying star will intervene :
The bitter sense that God has here no power ;
That the mad deed of one bewildered hour
 Is ceaseless, since it once has been :

The keen most clear inevitable sense
That pain most deep, or sorrow most intense,
 Can never cleanse man's touch away :
The passionate grasp of this one fact undying—
That she in Lancelot's arms one night was lying ;
 That in his arms again she lay :

This knowledge would rise up till time had end.
On either soul this knowledge would descend
 As the storm lowers on mountain land.
The very Maker of the stars and seas,
Who can uplift and change and govern these,
 Could not remove the mark of Lancelot's hand.

This is the agony, the hell-deep wrong ;
And this, O great true poet, this thy song
 Softens and veils and half conceals :—
The agony that through the day and night
As sombre vast eternity took flight
 Would still stalk close at a doomed Arthur's heels.

The agony whose changeless curse, it seems,
Not God nor Christ can move—not even in dreams :
 The agony which grasps with grim
Portentous grip that those lips kissed again
Would never be the wife's. They would retain
 The touch of Lancelot, the savour of him.

THE ETERNAL DEATH.

THERE is no death.—The death-deep awful gloom
We see and dread
Is not the real invincible fog-fume
Round the death-bed.

There is no death, no darkness. All is light.
The deepest gloom
Is not the murk impenetrable night
Around the tomb.

There is a deeper darkness than the dark
Where no stars beam :
A blackness where not one most faint star-spark
Can ever gleam.

Wrong-doing is death, and this alone is death.
Death is sent here
That we may shiver at his ice-cold breath
And, shuddering, fear :

But fear not him, but his similitude—
The death more deep
Than ever mortal dreamed, the death more rude
Than deathlike sleep.

The death we, and we only, can create ;
The death we bring
By fraud and selfishness and wrath and hate
And misdoing.

This is the eternal death. The other death
Is just a change,
A sudden dreamlike passage underneath
A process strange.

And all that gives it horror, steeped in gloom
Earth's golden springs,
Is but a symbol of the eternal doom
Wrong-doing brings.

DELUSIONS.

THE human spirit is wronged, it sometimes seems.—
God leads us by the winding path of dreams ;
 He gives us what we shun :
He sets delusions endless in our way,
So that we doubt the dark, we doubt the day,
 We doubt the noontide sun.

Love's rose ungathered lures with lovely red :
Yet, once possessed, how soon its tints have fled !
 How worthless is the flower !
The whole is huge delusion,—till at last
We cease to trust the story of our past,
 We live but by the hour.

True life is growth. At heart all things are one.
The same great Titan force that sways the sun
 And drives the stars along
Flushes the daisy, or a woman's cheeks ;
Or in the ripple of a hill-stream speaks,
 Or in a poet's song.

God made the spider, and the humming-bird.
He dowered with scent the violet ; at his word
 Then forth the thistle sprang.
The Paphian Venus laughed a laugh as clear
As that which fettered Dante's soul and ear
 When Beatrice's rang.

THE SONG OF RIPER MANHOOD.

Without Napoleon, where would Hugo be ?
Or Juvenal without the crimes that he,
The Roman poet, scourged?—
Heaven is indebted most of all to hell.
Goodness was brought to birth when Satan fell.
From darkness light emerged.

The murderer of to-day counts link by link
His ancestry from heaven. Although we shrink
At red war's dripping hand
The same one God is lord of war and peace :
At his own will he bids the bugles cease,
And robes with corn the land.

*

*

We would be angels ? No, the old earth wins.
Our ship veers round and tacks. Our very sins
Are used as ballast-weight.
We cannot rid us of the sins we loathe :
God is both for us and against us,—both :
He sometimes bars heaven's gate.

Effort seems madness sometimes, when we feel
That though we strive and agonize and kneel
God is against our prayer :
That not one single sin will he displace
Nor grant one single good deed scope and grace
Till the right hour is there.

Strive we, and pray we, never with such force,
Still life and fate pursue their wonted course ;
They never turn nor budge.
We would have flown. Instead of that, along
The mountain-path, too weary now for song,
We trudge, and tramp and trudge.

The victory is God's,—it is not ours.
At their due season bloom the soul's sweet flowers :
 We cannot claim the rose
In mid December ; nor the soul's full bloom
When round us spreads the January gloom ;—
 Slowly the soul's life grows.

Our triumph is as certain, when it comes,
As all defeats were certain. Light illumines
 The lowest and darkest grave.
We cannot oscillate, or sway, or fall :
Final redemption is the doom of all :
 God damns, that he may save.

The martyr, hanging downward on the cross,
Counting all earthly things for Christ's sake loss,
 Wins through God's power alone :
And, when his moment comes, Judas will rise
And face his future with heroic eyes ;
 God never lets fall one.

Without a Satan, how would God display
His sovereign majesty from day to day ?
 How could he rule or reign
Without the patient Arch-Fiend down below ?—
Pleasure gains emphasis from previous woe ;
 Live rapture from dead pain.

Without the poor sad maiden in the street
Would pureness' blossom smell so strangely sweet ?
 Would the white bridal-room
Be quite as sacred ? Would a pure girl's eyes
Seem full of sunshine stolen from heaven's own skies
 Had hell no deeps of gloom ?

Delusion dogs our path. By this we grow.
Some day the fields will no more overflow
From battle's sanguine tides.
War is delusion. Yet how great is Mars!
Decked out with orders, and ablaze with stars,
Along the ranks he rides.

Life is delusion. Yes, from end to end.
We know not whether we can trust a friend :
Passion melts through our clutch.
God we can trust? Yet God himself destroys,
Pulls down, rebuilds, creates. Our griefs and joys
Are plastic at his touch.

MAN AND GOD.

FAR through the stars the human heart can reach
And mark the waves on some celestial beach

Breaking, along the night.

Our human deeds affect the furthest stars—
Change to blood-red the leaves in iron Mars,
Or change the colours of the rings and bars
That Saturn bears, storm-bright.

Our actions bound before us into space :
Not one far heavenly spectral dwelling-place
Lambent amid the gloom
But burns with deeper or with fiercer hue
For the misdeeds and sins of me or you ;
The comet-birds who haunt the enormous blue
Heaven-sea, our crimes displume.

The whole is one.—A single act of will
(God cannot stay it) mounts the purple hill,
Climbs the stupendous night,
And, having struggled up the heavenly stair
And passed right through the star-impeded air,
Impinging on the farthest star-cliff there
Fringes its base with white.

Such air-waves are our deeds. God cannot stay
The airy course they take. From day to day
We mould all things anew.
One woman ruined in an English town
Alters the fashion of the dainty crown
Some far star-blossom bears, and sends a moan
For leagues across the blue.

The solitude is peopled with our deeds.—
Not words and thoughts, and hopes and fears, and creeds,
 Not these make history grow.
Our actions build the stars, and make all space
Fit either for the high God's dwelling-place
Or a vast temple where our own disgrace
 Fiend-like tramps to and fro.

The slightest noble deed is felt to-day,
Though it took place in far-off ages grey.
 The woman who first clung
To the wild dream of woman's purity
Passed to the dark unhonoured ; and yet she,
None other, saith to her sisters "Ye are free"
 To-day, and speaks our tongue.

The singer hidden in the years unknown
Who first had eyes to see and soul to groan
 For woman unredeemed
Passed,—yet his soul is seen in woman's eyes
To-day, when through them gleams the light of skies
Pure, sweet, unstained, unsullied. In like wise
 They dream, as once he dreamed.

One royal act, one regal stroke of will,
Can quite remake the universe,—can thrill
 The farthest bounds of space.
The seas are only blue as we design ;
Ours is the sketch, though God's is the outline ;
We grant their fruitage to the corn and vine ;
 We mould and shape the race.

MAN AND GOD.

And our immortal life is in our hand
Likewise. Fate hath no force that can withstand
The human force of will.
God gives the power to wrench the bolts aside
And force an entrance large, an entrance wide,
Into the deathless house death will provide :
Death has no power to kill.

We kill ourselves. Death cannot kill at all.
The human will can force the knave to fall
And grovel, soon or late.
Our misdeeds kill us. Nails and cruel spear,
Slaying Christ's body, never came anear
His soul. The only death we have to fear
Is that which we create.

God reaches us, and rules us. And we reach
The Lord of all the stars. Our broken speech
Can move the King of kings.
Not only *we* are governed ; we affect
God by our will, and force him to reject
This or that plan. We force him to select
New modes and motive-springs.

We act upon the stately will of God ;
Force it sometimes to choose another road.
We, gnats who dance in space,
Can none the less affect the central Power :
We, creatures whose life lasts one short sweet hour,
We, more ephemeral far than the June-flower,
Can stir God's dwelling-place.

We can so rule our daily devious way
That in the end the Lord cannot but say,
 " This soul must pass the gloom :
New labour waits beneath another sun
This pale ephemeral, whose one life is done."
This life is ended, when the right is won
 To disregard the tomb.

GOD AND MAN.

OUR minor daily acts are in our hand
To do, or not to do. Our deeds are planned
 Slowly from day to day.
We fix the hour for meeting with a friend.
We bring our mapped-out labour to an end.
 We speak. The months obey.

The human will is free. Yes, free indeed !
Along its woodland path it can proceed,
 Dealing with woodside flowers.
It gathers here a pink anemone
And there a blue-bell, bluer than the sea
 In its most sunlit hours.

The human will appoints its daily track ;
Climbs the steep mountain,—loiters, or turns back ;
 The human heart is proud :
It says, " I will, or will not do this thing ;"
It says, " I will see Venice in the spring :"
 Its laugh is long and loud.

" This woman I will love,—or here abstain : "
" Here I will yield me to sweet passion's reign,—
 There exercise control : "
" To-day dark hair allures me,—but to-night
Strange tresses golden-pure or auburn-bright
 May magnetise my soul."

Ah ! so God lets the human spirit dream.
He lets us revel in the silver gleam
 Of the electric light :
Then on a sudden through the night's blue damp
Flashes his heavenly mountain-shadowed lamp,
 His moon, full on our sight.

He watches us illume pale town on town
When dying sunset steals away its crown
 Of colours from the air ;
He marks our glow-worm lamps through street on street
Crawl slowly one by one, with flashing feet,
 Till legions glitter there :

He watches through the night the yellow gas
Flicker behind the dust-streaked London glass ;
 He waits till all is done,—
Then brings his single golden-armoured knight
To quench ten million lustres with one light,
 Parades his conquering sun.

He lets the human will create one flower ;
He lets us rear geraniums for one hour,
 Red petals and green stalks :
He lets the human will and human hand
Adorn a window-frame with bloom well planned,
 Or edge the garden walks :

And then he spreads the countless tropic bloom
As if in mockery through the tropic gloom
 Of forests dark and dim,
Weird places never pierced by human eye,
Designing all flower-souls to satisfy
 With the lone sight of him.

The human will maps out futurity.
 "I love this maid. To-morrow she shall be
 For ever mine, I deem!"

God at the very altar stands austere,
 Saying, in tones that thrill the human ear,
 "Your marriage is a dream."

God binds what we unbind, and setteth free
 What we would join.—We marry. Straightway he
 Annuls the marriage-bond.
 What we would seal as final, he unseals :
 Removes the mist of marriage, and reveals
 Limitless heights beyond.

We plan—he finishes : commence—he ends.
 He takes the old, and gives our hearts new friends.
 He lifts the gloomy night
 Far from our gaze, and fills the sky and air
 With morning's golden rapture, and the fair
 Song of the new-born light.

Again, when we are weary of the day,
 He hurls the burning ceaseless sun away
 And hangs in heaven the moon :
 He spreads across the solemn skies his peace
 Nocturnal,—darkens daylit towers and trees
 That stars may gem his throne.

We make our strange machines, our doll-like toys :
 God's hand is stretched across the heavens, and buoys
 The stars whose wild prow's race.
 We mould and shape our sculpture, wrought of stone :
 But God's triumphant sculptor-hand alone
 Could mould the model's grace.

Our gods and heroes, full of strength and force,
Ride down the road of time, that echoing course,
 With sword and shield and plume :
Full of heroic fire of life are they ;
Souls revered by the race until to-day ;
 Vast epochs they illumine.

We mould our leaders. We construct all these :
Napoleon, Frederick, Ajax, Hercules,
 The Cæsars,—that wild line.
But God constructed, at an epoch's close,
The heart of Christ, and filled it with repose
 Ineffably divine.

We plant one tree, and nurture it with care.
In all stars God can make all seasons bear
 Their fruited stores of grain.
Our tree has withered ? Lo ! a million springs
Are bringing forth their green-leaved fosterlings
 Beneath his bounteous rain.

We reap one field in autumn. Lo ! God stands
And reaps the far skies with immortal hands ;
 The stars are as his sheaves :
And the great comets plunging through the night,
Whirling through ceaseless space with wild delight,
 Glean the lost stars he leaves.

We toil all day, and through the midnight hours :
We guard our lands with grey grim castle towers :
 We mark our frontier-line.
God sends his wild snow-warriors in the dark :
Our lands are like the sea, without an ark—
 White wastes, from pine to pine !

Our mortal armies meet. We deck them out—
 The glittering wrestlers close with curse and shout ;
 Guns flash,—the quick swords gleam.
 But lo ! God's moon beholds the hosts at night :
 Their strength is withered, and their lordly might
 Has faded like a dream.

God's moon is still superb above the plain ;
 But on the ground red heaps of cloth remain,—
 Red, mixed with green and blue.
 No eye can tell the Russian from the Turk ;
 The Southern sword is as the Highland dirk,
 Wet with the same red dew.

All love, all life, God rules. We rule a part :
 But he with vigilant and ceaseless heart
 Observes and sways the whole.—
 A day's delight we plan. The vast surprise
 Of death he springs on us before the eyes
 Of our astonished soul.

We hold the right to put to shameful death
 One crime-clad soul, to stay the mortal breath
 Of one man,—this is ours.
 But God? He can with one storm-blast unmake
 The living universe,—as we can shake
 One dew-drop from the flowers.

NOTES.

NOTE A.

SOPHIA PEROVSKAIA.

"SHE was beautiful. It was not the beauty which dazzles at first sight, but that which fascinates the more, the more it is regarded.

"A blonde, with a pair of blue eyes, serious, and penetrating, under a broad and spacious forehead. A delicate little nose, a charming mouth, which showed, when she smiled, two rows of very fine white teeth.

"It was, however, her countenance as a whole which was the attraction. There was something brisk, vivacious, and at the same time ingenuous, in her rounded face. She was girlhood personified. Notwithstanding her twenty-six years, she seemed scarcely eighteen. A small, slender, and very graceful figure, and a voice as charming, silvery, and sympathetic as could be, heightened this illusion. It became almost a certainty, when she began to laugh, which very often happened. She had the ready laugh of a girl, and laughed with so much heartiness, and so unaffectedly, that she really seemed a young lass of sixteen.

"She gave little thought to her appearance. She dressed in the most modest manner, and perhaps did not even know what dress or ornament was becoming or unbecoming. But she had a passion for neatness, and in this was as punctilious as a Swiss girl.*

"She was very fond of children, and was an excellent schoolmistress. There was, however, another office that she filled even better; that of nurse. When any of her friends fell ill, Sophia was the first to offer herself for this difficult duty, and she performed that duty with such gentleness, cheerfulness, and patience, that she won the hearts of her patients, for all time.

"Yet this woman, with such an innocent appearance, and with such a sweet and affectionate disposition, was one of the most dreaded members of the Terrorist party.

* [The fact that, when in prison under sentence of death, Sophia Perovskaia wrote to her mother asking that some clean collars and cuffs might be sent to her, is a touching comment upon this statement.]

"It was she who had the direction of the attempt of March 13; it was she who, with a pencil, drew out upon an old envelope the plan of the locality, who assigned to the conspirators their respective posts, and who, upon the fatal morning, remained upon the field of battle, receiving from her sentinels news of the Emperor's movements, and informing the conspirators, by means of a handkerchief, where they were to proceed.

"What Titanic force was concealed under this serene appearance? What qualities did this extraordinary woman possess?

"She united in herself the three forces which of themselves constitute power of the highest order: a profound and vast capacity, an enthusiastic and ardent disposition, and, above all, an iron will."

"Sophia Perovskaia belonged, like Krapotkine, to the highest aristocracy of Russia. The Perovski are the younger branch of the family of the famous Rasumovsky, themorganatic husband of the Empress Elizabeth, daughter of Peter the Great, who occupied the throne of Russia in the middle of the last century (1741-1762). Her grandfather was Minister of Public Instruction; her father was Governor-General of St. Petersburg; her paternal uncle, the celebrated Count Perovsky, conquered for the Emperor Nicholas a considerable part of Central Asia.

"Such was the family to which this woman belonged who gave such a tremendous blow to Czarism.

"Sophia was born in the year 1854. Her youth was sorrowful. She had a despotic father, and an adored mother, always outraged and humiliated. It was in her home that the germs were developed in her of that hatred of oppression, and that generous love of the weak and oppressed, which she preserved throughout her whole life."

"*Underground Russia: Revolutionary Profiles and Sketches from Life.*" By Stepniak. Translated from the Italian. London: 1883. Pp. 126, 127, 128.

NOTE B.

"THE story of this crime has been related in full detail, but there is at present in Paris a lady who knew Madame Sihida personally, and who was for some time her companion in exile. From this lady I have ascertained a few supplementary details which only paint in darker colours the drama of the Ust-Kara prison-house. Madame Sihida was not more than twenty-seven years old at the time she was flogged to death. She was the daughter of a merchant, and completed her education at the gymnasium of her native town, Taganrog. When her examinations had all been

successfully passed, she became a school teacher, and exercised her profession in the same town. . . .

"Ust-Kara, where Madame Sihida was imprisoned, is the first of the villages which, taken together, constitute the gold-mining district of Kara. It is a large village, boasting of three shops, and inhabited principally by Russians, who live either by agricultural pursuits or by trade. Here is the female political prison. . . . The atmosphere, or rather the small rooms, are very damp and unwholesome. The prisoners complain that there is no ambulance chest provided in this prison, though it exists in the ordinary convict gaols. The service also is not done by women but by *gendarmes*, which is, of course, very unpleasant for the female prisoners. It was in this damp prison, and in a climate where the temperature, in winter, falls sometimes to 48° Réaumur below zero, and 42° Réaumur of cold is quite usual, that Madame Soluzeff-Kovalsky was dragged from bed in her night-dress, and made to walk down the passage to the officer's room. Here even her slender night garment was torn from her, and convict's robes substituted, amid the jeers of brutal soldiers or gaolers. Three times the women organized a hunger strike to obtain the removal of Masukoff, the director of the prison, who had caused this outrage to be committed. The last of these strikes, it will be remembered by those who have read the account, lasted twenty-two days. The women were only kept alive by food mechanically forced upon them. Then at last, Madame Sihida, that energetic 'bundle of nerves' as her friends describe her, contrived to box Masukoff's ears; and, instead of being hung as she had hoped for this offence, she was flogged to death. The Russian Government boasts that it has abolished the knout, but it has established in its stead the plet, a sort of birch which, according to the testimony of Russian officers, quoted by Mr. George Kennan, can be made to cause death in a hundred blows. It was precisely to a hundred blows that Madame Sihida was condemned, and this in spite of the protest of the prison doctor, who refused to be present."

Universal Review, April, 1890 (art. By "Administrative Order!")

NOTE C.

"THIS Kara drama followed closely upon the massacre of the exiles under 'administrative order' at Yakoutsk, which has also been fully described. I need only briefly recall the main facts. Thirty political prisoners had petitioned the Governor, *ad interim*—Ostachine—to revert to the old rules for travelling to further stations, as his proposed alterations would entail the probable death, from starvation, of a large proportion of

the exiles. Ostachine instructed the petitioners to await his answer in the house of an exile named Notkine, and said he did not wish the exiles to come to the Government House in a body, as this looked like a political demonstration. While they were waiting in Notkine's house, an officer of police came and ordered them to follow him to the Government House. The exiles hesitated, for this was against the Governor's directions, and they therefore asked for some explanation. For all answer they were set upon by the soldiers and butchered. Six were killed outright, and nine were wounded. All those who escaped were tried by court-martial; three were condemned to death, and the others to long terms of penal servitude. The three men, Hausmann, Kohan-Bernstein, and Zotoff, were hung, and this in spite of the fact that Zotoff and Kohan-Bernstein had both been wounded. Bernstein was struck by four bullets, and he had to be carried to the gibbet in his bed. The unfortunate man had the fatal noose placed round his neck as he lay suffering from his wounds, and then the bed was taken away from under him, and he was left to hang and die slowly by strangulation, for there could be no drop contrived at such an execution. Yet no one can have read the letter he wrote, shortly before his death, without being impressed by the firmness he displayed, in spite of his wounds, and the near approach of so terrible an end. The execution took place in the grey of the early morning; and, it is said, was witnessed at a distance, by Bernstein's wife; who, for her participation in the Yakoutsk affair, had been condemned to fifteen years' hard labour. It seems incredible that the authorities should have allowed this unfortunate woman to be lodged in such a place as to render it possible for her to witness this last tragedy in her husband's career."

Universal Review, April, 1890 (art. By "Administrative Order!")



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